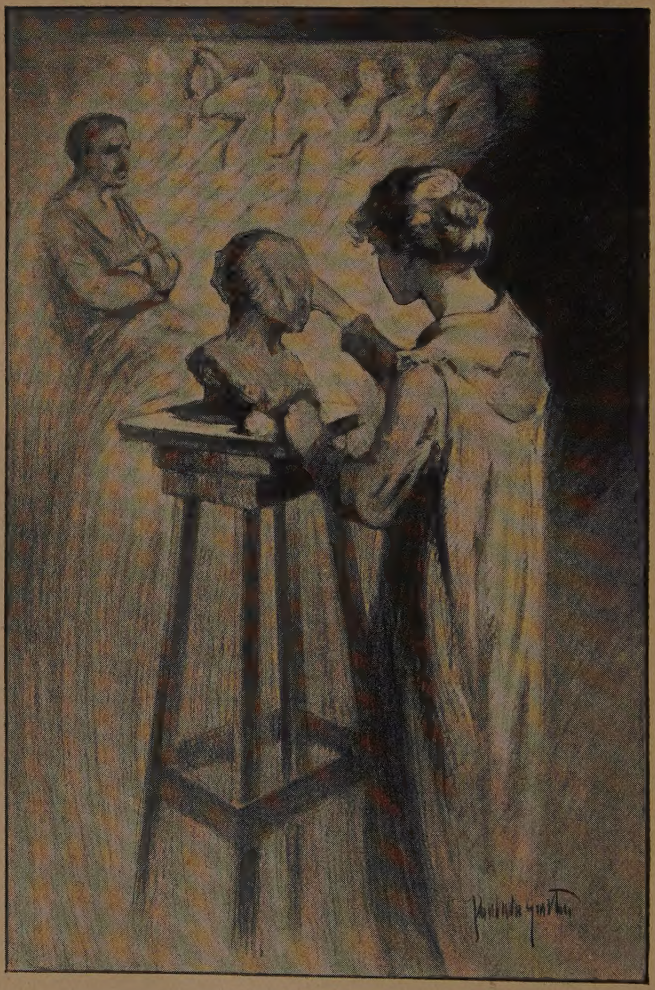
MISS PAT at SCHOOL

PEMBERTON GINTHER

MISS PAT
AT SCHOOL

EX LIBRIS
Jane Ayer



PATRICIA TOILED ALL AFTERNOON WITH THE ARDOR OF IGNORANCE AND HOPE.

MISS PAT AT SCHOOL

BY
PEMBERTON GINTHER

FRONTISPIECE BY
THE AUTHOR

PHILADELPHIA
THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1915, by
THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY.

To Nancy

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Two New Students	9
II.	Getting Acquainted	22
III.	Anticipation	46
IV.	The Initiations	66
V.	The Ghost Dance	80
VI.	Aftermath	94
VII.	David's Treat	111
VIII.	Smooth Waters	134
IX.	The Academy Ball	156
X.	The Prize Designs	177
XI.	The Little Rift	198
XII.	Judith's Discovery	213
XIII.	Restitution	228
XIV.	New Quarters and Old Friends	248
XV.	Afternoon Tea	266
XVI.	April Showers	284
XVII.	Farewell to the Studio	304

Miss Pat at School

CHAPTER I

THE TWO NEW STUDENTS

"ISN'T it jolly—to be here in a real Academy of Fine Arts, just like all the famous artists when they were young and unknown? Doesn't it make you feel all excited and quivery, Norn?" asked Patricia, as she fitted her key into the narrow gray locker with an air of huge enjoyment. "I don't see how you can look so cool. You are as calm and refrigerated as a piece of the North Pole."

Elinor smiled and her shining eyes traveled down the wide dim corridor with its rows of battered gray lockers, past the confusion of chairs and easels that clustered around the big screen of the composition room, straight into the farthest nook of the great bare work rooms beyond, where

an array of heroic-sized white casts loomed conspicuous in the cold north light above the clutter of easels, stools and drawing-boards that encompassed the silent, intent workers.

"I'm not half so calm as I look, Miss Pat," she said, seriously. "I'm more excited than I ever was in my life. It's too deep to come to the surface, I guess. I haven't any words for it."

Patricia nodded approval.

"That's your 'sensitive, artistic temperament,' as Mrs. Hand calls it. It must be awfully trying, though, not to be able to babble when you're pleased. It's such a relief to get it out of your system. I'd simply burst if I tried to keep quiet when I felt excited."

Elinor smiled absently, and then burst out fervently, "Isn't it all gloriously workmanlike—the bare walls and smudged doors and the painty smell, too? It's so serious. Outside, the people regard a picture as a mere luxury, but in here, *here*," she said, exultantly, "it is absolutely the necessary thing in life."

Patricia shut her door with a snap and turned to her sister with a glowing face, sweeping her stray tendrils back with an eager gesture.

"I know it!" she cried. "It makes even me feel as though I could turn off masterpieces *instanter*. Merely to look at those lumps of clay in the modeling room made me simply *ache* to get my hands into them. I was enchanted the moment I came in here with you this morning, never dreaming that I should be so lucky as to be one of the illustrious band myself. You're a perfect duck, Norn, to let me tag along after you here."

"You might as well do that as anything else," said Elinor, rather absently. "The best of it is that we shall be together. It will be such fun to see how we each get along."

"'We!'" echoed Patricia. "You mean how *you* get along. I shan't count at all. I may have to give up when I actually get at it." Then with a swift change of spirit she added: "All the same, if I couldn't do better than some of those

smudgy celebrities in the modeling room were doing, I'd feel pretty sorry for myself. Such forlorn, lop-sided caricatures of human beings I never saw. I don't see how they can do them."

Elinor's soft laugh rippled out. "It's clear that you haven't tried to do it, or you'd see how easy it is to make caricatures instead of portraits," she said. "I didn't think they were so very bad."

"I'd be ashamed to have anyone see them if I'd done them," declared Patricia, unconvinced. "They seemed quite cocky over them, poor idiots. I hope some of them do better than that, or I shan't learn much."

"It would be wonderful if you did make a success of it," said Elinor, beginning to put her newly acquired implements into her locker. "How surprised Bruce will be that you are studying here, too."

"Don't tell him, for the world!" cried Patricia, her brow wrinkling at the thought of that noted artist's surprise. "I shouldn't have dared to take the course if he was ever to see anything I did! I'm only

going into it for fun, and I shouldn't have dreamed of doing it if it hadn't been the cheapest course in the whole school. You know I shouldn't have, Elinor dear, so please don't tell."

Elinor gave her a reassuring squeeze. "Don't be afraid, Miss Pat. I won't give away your dark secrets to anyone till you want me to. You'll tell David, won't you?"

Patricia pondered a moment. "I don't believe I'll tell anyone until I see what I can do," she decided. "I'd love to surprise Francis Edward David Carson Kendall, otherwise known as Frad, but I'll wait till I know whether it is to be the sort of surprise he'd welcome before I spring it on him. He wouldn't appreciate a hideous fizzle, like some of those we saw, and I'd hate to inflict a newly discovered twin brother with anything of that sort myself."

"I don't believe Fra—David would be very critical; he's so good natured," said Elinor. "Isn't it hard to get used to him as our brother, after knowing him as David

Carson for a whole summer? I can't ever feel sure of what is his right name now. We knew him as David Carson for so long, and now that he wants to be called by his real name, I simply get more twisted all the time."

"That's why I call him Frad," said Patricia, with a twinkle. "Combines the whole and is entirely original, and so suited to his situation. I don't think he ought to drop all the Carson name, particularly while we're all living comfortably on the Carson money. It seems sort of ungrateful to me."

"But you know Mrs. Carson always wanted him to take his own name if he ever found it," said Elinor, closing her locker and dropping the key into her bag.

"Well, he's dear with any name, and I'm glad Judy discovered him when she did, money or no money," said Patricia seriously. "He was so disappointed when Madam Blitz said my voice needed another year to grow in, that I'm awfully glad I've hit on something to do that will fill

in the time, and keep me *learning*. That's really the great thing, isn't it, after all?"

As she spoke a gong sounded from beyond the closed door of a nearby class room; there was sound of movement and subdued voices, then the door swung grudgingly and a number of students of various ages with smudged hands and soiled aprons came straggling out into the dim corridor, laden with canvases and drawings to be stowed in the long line of lockers that stretched on either side of the hallway.

Elinor looked at them with a little quick sigh of excited envy.

"They are all so used to it," she said, with a note of humility in her sweet voice. "They make me feel so *green!*"

"Poof! You needn't care," said Patricia, breezily. "If Bruce Haydon says you can draw, you shouldn't mind a lot of sloppy students. Wait till you've been here a month—you'll be rearing your crest as high as any."

Elinor shook her head. "To tell the truth, Miss Pat dear, I almost wish Bruce hadn't gotten me into the life and portrait

classes without the regular term in the antique rooms. I shouldn't feel half so shivery about going in there and drawing from those big casts, for I know they are all more or less beginners there."

"Stuff!" protested Patricia stoutly. "You know you've been simply crazy to get here. Why spoil it all by *squibbling?* I think it's perfectly gorgeous I'm wild to begin myself, and I'm about as green as any old shamrock. Besides, it's a mighty poor way to show your gratitude to Bruce for putting you right slap into the highest classes without slaving your life out for years, perhaps. I'll tell him——"

"Indeed, you'll do no such thing!" cried Elinor, the color rushing to her cheeks and her authority as eldest sister asserting itself promptly. "I don't intend that Bruce shall hear a word until I've had my first good criticism."

Patricia smiled to herself at the effect of her ruse. "All right. I'll be good," she promised. "Now, to come down to earth again—where are we going to feed? I wish we could find the lunch room. It

would be such fun to look our future classmates over while we browse."

"I think it's in the basement," said Elinor dubiously, "but I don't believe we can buy things there. We'd have to go out, anyway, I'm afraid."

A blue-aproned girl who had been packing her materials in an adjoining locker turned civilly.

"Are you speaking about the lunch room?" she asked in a pleasant contralto voice. "I can show you where it is, but you'll have to bring your lunch with you. There are gas stoves to cook on in the back room, and tables and chairs in the front one, if you're not too late to get a place."

Elinor thanked her cordially, while Patricia almost dislocated her neck trying to get a glimpse of the big canvas that protruded from the locker while still keeping far enough behind Elinor for her curiosity to pass unnoticed.

"It is down a little iron stairway behind that screen," said the girl, tucking a paper parcel into the capacious pocket of her blue jean paint dress, "and it's only for

girls. The men have one on the other side of the building. Come down as soon as you can, for it's fearfully crowded later on."

Patricia watched her disappear behind the big screen of the composition room, and then she turned excitedly to Elinor.

"Isn't she nice?" she asked admiringly. "She's so cock-sure of herself and so calm about it. I like the way her eyebrows meet over her haughty nose, and that superior kink in her nice, crinkly lips. I know she's going to be worth while when we know her."

"For goodness' sake, don't be jumping into admirations wholesale, Miss Pat, darling," said Elinor, gently pulling Patricia's arm through hers as they passed into the narrow entrance to the dressing room. "Don't rush at it so, ducky. You can't know the right people at once, and it saves a lot of bother not to get too familiar with the wrong ones."

"Just as you say, Miss Solomon," rippled Patricia, too happy to be depressed by anything. "I'll be as frigid as you like,

and if any of these frivolous young things try to scrape an acquaintance with me, I'll snub them good and hard."

She lowered her voice as two newcomers entered—one a slender, faded young woman with near-sighted pale eyes, and the other a blond girl with a dazzling skin and glorious shimmering hair wound around a shapely head. Both were in aprons, but the younger wore a dull green that set off her fair beauty to perfection, while the checked gingham of the other proclaimed a hopelessly downright taste.

Patricia, at the mirror, paused in the act of pinning on her hat, her eyes riveted on the vision in dull green.

"Isn't she lovely?" she demanded in a thrilling whisper of Elinor, who had slipped into her things and was already at the door.

The girl unmistakably caught the words, for she turned a brilliant, measuring, half-approving look on her while she slowly began to divest herself of the alluring green apron. She was so evidently used to admiration that her smooth cheek showed no change of color, though the panic red

of swift confusion flamed on Patricia's bright face.

Pinning on her hat hastily, she fled after Elinor, feeling that she must seem most inexperienced and childish in the eyes of this fascinating creature who at once had eclipsed all previous claimants to her admiration.

"I wonder if she is in the modeling class?" she said as she caught up with Elinor in the composition room. "I don't suppose there's any such luck as that. She looks too clean——"

Elinor interrupted her with a little shake. "You hopeless little goose," she said, in laughing despair. "You've just promised me not to, and here you are it, hammer and tongs, under my very eyes."

"My word!" cried Patricia indignantly. "You don't mean I'm not to look at anyone! I can't even express a little tame approval without your accusing me of grabbing a new soul mate. You can't say she isn't simply ravishing, and just because she's alive instead of being a picture or statue or some such *made-up* thing, you

want me to turn up my nose at her. I must say you are getting to be awfully extreme, Elinor Kendall. You'll want me to wear a muzzle next."

Elinor gave her a loving look, and Patricia, appropriating a corner of her big muff, gave her hand a surreptitious squeeze.

"I wish I could kiss you, you old angel," she said, irrevelantly. "Let's lay in our pemmican, and hustle back for a seat in the parquet circle. I'm dying to look them over and see who's who and what's what before I make any more breaks."

CHAPTER II

GETTING ACQUAINTED

"WHY, it's like a laundry," exclaimed Patricia in disappointment as she looked about her.

The low-ceiled whitewashed apartment into which they had descended from the winding iron stair was sepulchrally bare and empty in the flicker of its noisy gas jets, the rusty gas stoves at its farther end emphasizing its general air of desolation.

Elinor glanced beyond, through the low doorway to the next room.

"Suppose we do without hot things today?" she proposed. "The tables look pretty full in there. We mightn't get a place if we delay too long."

"Suits me to a gnat's heel," declared Patricia eagerly. "Food is a secondary article, anyway, when it comes to character study. I'm not so keen on cookery since I sighted this tasteful apartment."

She followed Elinor into the larger room where a feeble daylight, filtering in through heavily grated basement windows, struggled with the flaring gas jets, and the odor of cocoa and bread and butter mingled with sachet and the fumes of turpentine and paint.

Elinor made her way over the mottled stone floor with as easy a grace as though it were a flowery turf, but Patricia, not so well schooled in concealing her feelings, made a wry mouth.

"If this is where the celebrities eat, I don't wonder they're smudgy," she said in an undertone, as they seated themselves at the last vacant table and spread their purchases on its discolored surface. "This doesn't strike me as being very appetizing."

"It's clean, anyway, Miss Pat," said Elinor, whose practiced eyes had been busy. "It looks soiled because the tabletops are old marble and the floor is mottled cement, but it is really clean, though I can't honestly say it is attractive on first sight."

"One gets used to anything in time,"

said Patricia airily. "You remember how Sally Lukes missed the doing of those five weekly washes after Johnny got prosperous enough to keep her in comfort. I reckon we'll be just like that after a while—can't eat without smudges on the table and paint-splotches on the dining-room walls."

Her eyes strayed about, resting on one group after another till they lighted with sudden interest.

"There she is," she said ardently. "You can't deny, Elinor, that she's terribly good to look at. Why, the very way she manipulates that frilly napkin reconciles me to my food. I declare I'm twice as hungry as I was before."

The girl certainly did make a charming and refreshing picture in her pretty gown, and with a dainty lunch covering the objectionable table. Opposite to her sat the drab young woman, silently eating while she read hurriedly from a technical magazine. The contrast between the two was so great that it made Elinor wonder.

"She must be unselfish and agreeable," she said, forgetting her momentary pre-

judice, "particularly when the other doesn't seem to appreciate her society very highly. I fancy that one isn't very diverting. I wonder why they are such chums."

"Relatives, perhaps," hazarded Patricia, reveling in Elinor's conversion. "I hope we get to know her soon, don't you, Norn? She must be awfully popular. See how they all turn when she passes. I'm sorry she's going, though, for I could simply feast my eyes on her for hours."

Their new acquaintance of the corridor stopped at their table as she, too, made her way out.

"I am going into the portrait class when I go up," she said, her dark-fringed eyes smiling frankly down on Elinor. "They tell me you are going to take your first plunge this afternoon. I'll be glad to show you about if you need any chaperoning."

Elinor's eyes met hers gratefully. "I'll be so glad to have you tell me what I should do," she said with relief and instant friendliness in her soft voice. "I'm just a beginner, you know. I've never been in

a class in my life and I'm rather scared about it."

The lips that Patricia had designated as "nice and crinkly" widened in a bright smile that held no hint of hauteur.

"I'll be about in the corridor when you come up," she promised. "You don't need to feel that way about it. It's the simplest thing in the world—after you once get settled. You're in great luck to get into life and head classes without ever having gone to school before. I fancy you are a very special brand of genius to have such privileges."

Elinor blushed and shook her head.

"I studied with Bruce Haydon last summer," she said. "He got me in here."

"O—oh," responded the girl, her face suddenly alight. "That is splendid. You know he's the most severe critic we have, but we all adore his work." Then she added as an afterthought: "He's tremendously popular with the men. He studied here, you know."

Patricia opened her eyes wide. "Why, Bruce is the most amiable sort," she

protested. "He'll simply eat out of your hand up at home. I didn't know he ever criticized here," she ended, rather suspiciously.

Elinor's new friend smiled good-naturedly. "He only drops in once in a while," she said. "He was here pretty often last month, but he hadn't been here before that for nearly four years, they said. He's abroad now, isn't he?"

Elinor told her that Bruce was in Italy, getting his studies for the Français Society's panel of early Italian history.

"It must be jolly to know him out of the limelight," said the girl, seriously. "The girls were so crazy over him here that there wasn't a chance for a rational word with him, unless one were a man. He simply evaporated when he saw an apron."

Patricia laughed. "He's not so retiring in private," she declared, gayly. "He was one of our happy family for three months last summer and we never noticed any shyness; did we, Norn?"

Elinor reared her head with dignity. "He was very kind and friendly to us,"

she explained to their companion, "because he had been very much devoted to my aunt, who left us the house where we now live. He had no mother and Aunt Louise was very fond of him."

"Well, you're awfully in luck, however it is," replied the girl. "I'll see you in about fifteen minutes," and she nodded as she moved off, her dark hair gleaming in the mingled lights as she carried her small fine head proudly on her slender neck.

Patricia was about to make a comment when she suddenly turned and came back to them.

"I forgot to tell you my name," she said, holding out a strong, slender hand. "I am Margaret Howes, and I know you are Elinor Kendall, for I saw it on your locker. I don't know your sister's name—she *is* your sister, isn't she?"

Patricia was introduced, and Margaret Howes, with promises to meet them later, went off finally, and Patricia and Elinor set to work to dispose of their neglected lunch, enjoying their own comments on the assem-

bled groups more than they did the cakes and fruit.

"Just look at that mournful creature." Patrica motioned with her eyebrows to the opposite side of the room, where a large, stout young woman in somber cloak and wide-plumed hat was eating her way through a chocolate éclair with just such an air of tragic and settled melancholy as one sometimes sees in a child whose grief is momentarily its most cherished possession.

"Isn't she the limit?" said Patricia in disdain. "She oughtn't to eat frivolous things like éclairs. I wonder at her lack of judgment."

"She isn't in mourning," said Elinor, making a discovery. "I wonder who she is. She's impressive enough to be the president of the board, and Bruce says that's the most important person in the place."

"She's rather too *collap-y* for my taste," volunteered Patricia, gathering up the remains of their repast. "I like the looks of lots of the others far better than hers.

Let's ask Miss Margaret Howes about her. No doubt she can tell us what is her secret trouble."

They followed the general exodus upstairs, feeling more and more at home with every step.

"Isn't it funny how familiar that antique room looks?" said Patricia with enjoyment. "I feel quite like an old residenter already. By the time my clay comes I'll have the sensations of the oldest inhabitant."

Elinor was breathing fast as she swept the corridor with anxious glance.

"I hope Miss Howes doesn't forget," she said apprehensively. "I'd so much rather go into the class with her."

A girl sauntered past them as they loitered before their lockers.

"Looking for anyone?" she asked briskly, and hardly waiting for the answer, she raised her voice and called through the door of the next room:

"Hello, Howes! Here's someone looking for you!"

Patricia expected Margaret Howes as she emerged to show some surprise or annoy-

ance at this summary mode of speech, but she was as serene and unconscious as ever.

"I'm busy, Griffin," she began, and then broke off as she saw the girls. "Oh, here you are," she said to Elinor. "I was looking for you in the modeling room."

The newcomer raised her pale eyebrows. "Absent-minded as ever, I see, Howes," she said with a whimsical sort of fondness in her peculiar voice. "Better run off to the head class before you forget where you're due."

She watched Margaret Howes and Elinor till they turned into the screened entrance to the portrait room; then she turned to Patricia with easy friendliness.

"You're fresh meat, aren't you?" she asked with a grin that widened her full mouth to a line. "When'd you come?"

Patricia gave her the brief outlines of her enrolment, and she nodded approvingly.

"Good stuff in the modeling room," she commented briskly. "But don't let old Bottle Green bulldoze you into thinking it's a deaf and dumb asylum or the vestibule to the morgue or any such sequestered

spot. She's deadly dull, you know, and she almost faints if you whisper while the model is posing. She's monitor and I will say she enjoys the job."

"What does she do?" asked Patricia, delighted with the ease and candor of this speech. She felt sure this rickety, loose-jointed, pale-colored young woman was going to be worth while.

"As monitor, you mean?" responded the other, opening a locker near by and beginning to assemble her implements from a jumble of all sorts of odds and ends with which the locker was overflowing. "As merely monitor she sees that the models are posed, gets the numbers ready for us to draw when there is a new model, sees to it that we don't riot too loudly through the pose, takes any complaints we may have to make, to the powers above. But as guardian angel of the class, she soars far above our low conception of duty and propriety. Phew! Wait till you see her at it." Here her speech was lost while she delved head first into the welter.

Patricia occupied herself getting her tools

from the convenient shelf on her own locker, hoping that the talk was not to end there.

Griffin emerged as suddenly as she had disappeared. "But it's the men that spoil her," she went on as though no interruption had occurred. "They're polite to her because she's so everlastingly gloomy. Same sort of politeness they'd show to a hearse, you know—respectful but not companionable."

Patricia gave an exclamation. "I believe I've seen her!" she cried. "She wears a long cloak and a hat with a big black plume, doesn't she? We noticed her at lunch and wondered what was the matter with her."

"Just a case of permanent glooms, if you ask me," replied Griffin airily. "She loves melancholy, though she is an awfully good sort, too. She gets on my nerves, though, she's so *brittle*."

Patricia puckered her brow inquiringly.

"Breaks a bone every time anyone looks hard at her," explained the other, shoving

the protruding conglomeration of her locker inside and snapping the door quickly on it. "She's more bones than the average, and she breaks them regularly every time she learns the name of a new one. I think she oughtn't to be allowed in the dissecting room for any consideration. She's just out of splints now for a right arm fracture, and, believe me, she worked all the time with her left."

"How could she?" wondered Patricia, feeling awed by this devotion to art.

"She couldn't," grinned Griffin. "That's the point. She's so taken up with her pose as suffering martyr that she overlooks a trifle like good work. Heavens, there's the gong! I've kept you here gassing when I know you're crazy to get to work. Come along in, and I'll help you set up your stand before the model poses again."

Patricia followed her into the big, clay-soiled, dusty room, clutching her new smooth wooden tools with nervous fingers.

On the large revolving model stand in the center sat a dark, slender Russian-

looking young man, indifferent to the group that with their tall-wheeled stands were circled about him. He sat with his narrow blue eyes sleepily fixed on the wall, regardless alike of the sturdy smocked men and slender boys in full blue-paint jackets, as of the equally silent and clayey girls and women that scrutinized him with earnestly squinting eyelids. The only creature in the room that seemed to evoke the slightest responsive flicker of intelligence was the black-robed, gray-aproned, redundant figure of the monitor.

Patricia's stand, with its heavy curved iron head-piece and some lengths of copper and lead wire, was waiting for her in the clay room, and together they wheeled it into the modeling room, where the gloomy Miss Green scanned them with kind but somber eyes, plainly regarding their entrance as an interruption.

"You've got to make butterflies of the wire-loops, you know, to hold the clay up, or it'll slump down off the iron head-piece soon as you get your head set up," explained her instructor in an agreeable

tone. "It's easier to set up a head than a figure, I can tell you——"

"*Miss Griffin!*" came the dreary voice of the monitor, as with a fat and dimpled finger she pointed solemnly to the sign on the door, "No Talking."

Griffin grinned amiably at the reproving finger. "Only the necessary instructions to a novice, Green dear," she protested smoothly. "I'm saving you the trouble of showing her how. You really ought to thank me instead of holding me up to scorn."

Miss Green, with a kindly glance at Patricia, puckered up her lips in the circle that only fat, soft-fleshed people can accomplish and laid the impartial finger on them as a sign that no more words were to be wasted, and the class, temporarily attentive to the newcomers, became absorbed again.

A heavy-shouldered dark man, whose workmanlike appearance was heightened by the torn and spotted linen apron he wore, came quietly over to Patricia, and, taking the wire from Miss Griffin's thin,

nervous hands, silently and swiftly finished the work she had begun, while she, with a nod of acquiescence, went to her own stand and began to thump lumps of clay into shape about her own iron head-piece.

Patricia accepted the help as silently as it was offered, and when he brought her clay and, still mute, showed her how to block the rough clay into a semblance of a human head, she smiled at him with ready gratitude, not daring more for fear of the omnipotent Miss Green.

"How do you like it now?" asked Griffin, as the gong released them for the rest, and they slipped out in the corridor to look for Elinor.

"Perfectly fine and dandy!" cried Patricia, glowing. "My word, but that Miss Green is severe! I never *heard* such silence as in that room. Why, an ordinary schoolroom is a perfect Babel compared to it."

"You'll get used to old Bottle Green, all right," said Griffin reassuringly. "Her bark is a whole lot worse than her bite. She's a trump at heart, though she *is* awful fool on the outside."

Elinor was waiting for them, and Patricia could see that she was in a state of great agitation. She hurried to her, while her companion dropped behind to exchange notes with one of the men from the composition room.

"What is it, Norn? Didn't you get along all right?" she asked breathlessly.

Elinor dropped on a stool and raised her face to her sister, and Patricia was surprised to see that her eyes were shining with joy instead of tears.

"Oh, Miss Pat!" she cried in an ecstasy. "I've made good, and I can write to Bruce and tell him!"

"What, already?" exclaimed Patricia rapturously. "You *duck!* Tell me all about it instantly."

She swept Elinor off the stool, away from the crowded dressing room, and at last found a deserted corner behind a big cast.

"Now," she demanded, "tell me all about it, or I'll simply die of ingrowing curiosity."

Elinor rippled and dimpled in a surprisingly sparkling fashion as she recounted

her experience in the portrait room, and Patricia, while she listened, marveled at the change in her placid sister.

"And so," concluded Elinor, "when I had just gotten ready to come out to see you, some more of them came over and looked at it. And one of them said, 'Dorset's right. It's a pace-maker all correct,' and then they brought some other men, and I left."

Patricia, greatly excited, patted her hard on the shoulder. "I told you you'd be a winner," she crowed. "I guess Bruce knew what he was talking about."

Elinor's face clouded. "But I have only started the outline," she confessed. "And I'm awfully weak on putting in the tones. I'm afraid I'll make a fizzle of it."

"See here," said Patricia, facing her severely. "I'm tired of your deceptive timidity. Just let someone else say you can't do it, and you'd feel mighty mad about it, but you're willing to scare me out of my feeble senses by croaking."

Elinor jumped up laughing, and hugged her. "I'll be as conceited as you like,

if you'll stop scolding," she promised, gayly. "It doesn't look well to be too much under the thumb of a younger sister, even if she is a promising sculptor. By the way, how are *you* getting on? I hear that Miss Griffin is a wonderful worker. Did you see anything of her work?"

Patricia gave her a brief outline of the class and its chief characters, as far as she had observed, dwelling on Miss Green with great satisfaction.

"I know she's going to be a treat," she declared. "I hope she keeps whole for a while at least, until I get better acquainted."

"And do you know," she went on, "that the model is a Russian refugee, and he tried to kill himself because he was so homesick. He's just out of the hospital, and he has a great red scar across his breast. Isn't it exciting to be among such different sort of people? We've always been so sort of tabbified."

"We've had enough ups and downs, I am sure," said Elinor vaguely. It was evident that her mind was not on either their varied past nor even the fascinating present,

but was busy with a future of progress and achievement.

"Wake up, old lady," cried Patricia. "There's the gong, and we must fly."

Patricia toiled all that afternoon with the ardor of ignorance and hope. The others looked at her with occasional interest, but otherwise paid little attention to her. In the rests she went out to visit Elinor, or Elinor came in to watch her progress. Her head fairly swam with the delightful novelty of this new and quick-flowing life. When the last gong rang she heard it with regret.

"It's better than I ever dreamed," she said to the amiable Griffin as she was showing her how to put the wet cloths about her work. "It's not half so hard as I thought it would be, either."

"Wait till Saturday, when old Jonesy lights on you," warned her new friend. "You won't find life so lightsome when his eagle eye discovers you."

"Pooh, I shan't mind how criss-cross he is," declared Patricia valiantly. "I'm only the rankest greenhorn, anyway. He can't expect me to be a Rodin."

She washed her tools in the grimy tanks of the clay room, more in love with it every minute, and when she joined Elinor at their lockers, she was fairly bursting with enthusiasm.

"It's simply heavenly, and I don't know how we got along without it!" she cried, rapturously. "It makes me wild to think of the *months* we've wasted this fall."

Elinor laughed her low ripple. "We didn't find Francis Edward David till the middle of December, and it's now the third week in January. I don't think we've let much grass grow under our feet."

"I wish this were the night for night life," said Patricia fervently. "I'd stay and watch you begin——"

"No, you wouldn't," said Elinor, promptly. "They don't allow other people in the life-class rooms. You'd have to go home and see that Judith was all right. We can't leave her too much to her own devices, even if she is the best little thing in the world."

"Bless her heart!" cried Patricia, with a laugh. "I'd clean forgot that I had any

relatives in the world. It's a good thing I have you to keep me straight, Norn. Mercy, what a jam! I don't believe we'll ever get a place at the wash-stands."

The dressing room was crowded to its limit, paint brushes were being washed and stained hands scrubbed at the line of faucets that occupied two sides of the room; girls were hurrying into their street clothes, while others, coming in for the night life, were getting into aprons and paint dresses; some few who were staying for the night life were curled up on the wide couches, exchanging comments with their friends among the hurrying crowd while they refreshed themselves with crackers or cakes.

Patricia, with her cheeks glowing and twin lights dancing in her big eyes, loitered so over her dressing that they were among the last to leave.

"I hate to go, don't you?" she said, as they came out into the corridor, which was dimmer than ever in the sparsely lit twilight. "I love— Oh, how you made me jump!" she cried, starting back as a

figure stepped from the alcove by the street entrance.

The girl, who was unknown to them both, addressed them impartially.

"The Committee on Initiation hereby notify you that your initiation will take place on Friday of this week, and you are instructed to produce the usual initiation fee, or answer to the committee for the failure."

Patricia gasped. "My word!" she cried. "They don't postpone things much around here, do they? What is the fee?"

"Three pounds of candy for the modeling and composition class, four for the head and illustration class, and five for the life," was the prompt response.

Patricia giggled. "You're in for it, Norn. You have to pony up for the head and the night life, too. I'm in luck to be in the mudpie department."

"What is the initiation itself?" asked Elinor, as the girl turned away.

"You'll find out when it happens," she replied, over her shoulder. "They never know themselves till the last moment.

The day classes are tame—just a speech when you turn in your candy or some such mild diversion, but the night life is more sporting, and they may put you through a course of sprouts, but they're good-natured idiots on the whole. None of us are as outrageous as we seem."

Elinor looked after her thoughtfully.

"I hope they won't be too hard on me," she said slowly. "I'd be sorry to begin my term with anything that left the least bitter taste. Everything here is so free-spirited and high-minded that I want it to keep on being so for me always."

Patricia's eyes narrowed. "I believe I'll make my candy up in as attractive a way as I possibly can, and I'll spring it on them first thing, so they'll be in too good a humor to want to haze me very hard. Don't you think that might work for you, too?"

"Indeed I do," replied Elinor, heartily. "I'm getting an idea already, and if I can put it through, I don't believe the committee will have so much fun with me as they may think."

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATION

"WHAT a pack of mail," said Judith.

It was Friday morning, and the three girls were the last in the dining-room. The sun was slanting brightly in over the table and fell across the pile of letters with a prophetic shimmer, making the little red and green patches of the stamps flame into gay prominence.

Patricia sorted them over rapidly before Elinor had reached the table.

"Here's one for you from Frad," she announced, "and one for me from Miss Jinny, and there are two for Judy from Rockham—looks like Mrs. Shelly and Hannah Ann, but I'm not sure—and the rest are only circulars. Atkins' Diablo Water and Bartine's Foreign Tours."

"I do wish they wouldn't send those circulars to us. They're so disappointing,

for half the time they look like real letters," said Judith, reaching an eager hand for her own mail. "I think they ought to keep them for older people who don't care so much. Oh, it *is* Mrs. Shelly, Miss Pat," she broke off, as she tore open the first envelope and began eagerly to scan the sheets.

Patricia, absorbed in her own letter, merely grunted "Uh-huh" and turned the page. Then she burst out joyfully, "Well, of all people in the world! Listen, Norn. Miss Jinny is coming to town next week to stay four or five days, and she wants to know if we can get her a place here. Isn't that jolly!"

Elinor, who had lifted her eyes perfunctorily, gave real attention.

"How splendid!" she cried. "Now we'll have a chance to give back a few of the kindnesses she showered on us last summer. Of course we can find a place, and we won't let her come except as our guest, and we'll give her the very best sort of a time we can, to show how glad we are to have her here."

"If Mrs. Hudson hasn't any other room,

she can have mine," said Judith promptly. "She never would let us make up for all those afternoons that she kept the library for us, and I'd love to be *dreadfully* uncomfortable if I could help make her comfortable."

Elinor laughed and patted the slender hand that pressed the table with such nervous force.

"I don't think Miss Jinny'd want any of us to suffer for her pleasure, Ju dear," she said gently. "I'm sure Mrs. Hudson has a good front room that we can get. I heard that Miss Snow had left and her room wasn't to be filled till next week; so we are just in the nick of time, you see."

"Isn't it lucky?" cried Patricia radiantly. "You'll see about it right away, won't you, Elinor? It has a splendid view of the park. I know she'll love that. You know how she hates 'bricks and mortar.' "

Elinor nodded, picking up her letter again. "You don't seem at all keen about David," she began, when Judith broke out excitedly, holding up her letter.

"Mrs. Shelly wants me to come with

Miss Jinny and stay over Sunday. Please, please let me go, Elinor, for she says she'll get out all her old stories and letters, and we'll have a splendid time!"

Patricia and Elinor swept a swift, remembering glance at the pale, eager face, and the memory of that scene in the old book-room at Greycroft, when Judith had the vision of her future, flashed into each mind. They had had no laughter then for Judith's prophecy of her literary career, and so now they had only instant sympathy with their little sister's enthusiasm.

"Of course you shall go, Ju dear," said Elinor, warmly. "It's sweet of Mrs. Shelly to ask you, and you'll have a lovely time in that dear little old-fashioned house with her and Miss Jinny."

"Won't it seem queer to you to be anywhere but at Greycroft, though?" mused Patricia, her eyes wide and absent. "Although we've only had the place not quite a year, I feel as though we'd always been there, and I can't imagine how it would seem to have to live anywhere else *now*."

"That's because it is the first real home

you've known," said Elinor. "One always feels that way about a *home*."

Judith cocked her blond head thoughtfully.

"Don't you think it's the house, too?" she asked critically. "Some houses seem to be so alive and to belong to some people. Greycroft just fitted Aunt Louise, and when she left, it was lonesome till it found someone who liked the same things she did, and then it opened its eyes and waked up again. I don't believe it would be itself with Mrs. Hand in it, or even with the Halls, though they are so sweet and fine-mannered."

"Wise Judy," commended Patricia. "You've discovered half the secret. But here's Elinor, like patience on a monument, with David's letter in her lily-white paw. What does he say, Norn? Is he coming to town this month as he promised? Does he like Prep as well as he did——"

"Do let her read it to us," begged Judith. "You chatter so, Miss Pat, that no one can get a word in edgewise."

Patricia made a laughing face.

"Fire away, Scheherezade," she commanded, folding her arms in eager attention. "Unfold the tale of the letter of the long-lost twin brother of the three lovely sisters of——"

Judith, who had muffled the sparkling stream of Patricia's nonsense, drew her hand away with a little squeal.

"*Ouch!*" she cried reproachfully. "That's not fair. You bit."

"Not hard," Patricia reassured her gravely. "Just enough to turn you loose. 'Twas not so deep as a grave nor so wide as a church door, but it did answer. Go on, Elinor, love, it's getting late."

Judith had picked up the envelope and was examining the seal.

"Isn't the frat paper lovely?" she sighed. "I do hope I shall go to college—or else have a husband who belongs to a lot of——"

"Silence!" thumped Patricia.

Elinor, who had been quietly going on with her breakfast, laid down her fork.

"Read it for yourselves," she smiled, tossing the sheet across the table. "My

time's about up. It's criticism morning in the portrait class, and I want to get a lot more done before Mr. Benton comes."

Patricia grabbed the sheet before Judith could set down her glass, and she read it aloud, with great enjoyment.

"'Dear Elinor'—begins well, doesn't it, Judy? I couldn't have done much better myself—'Tom Hughes and I are coming to town next Saturday, and we are going to blow ourselves, for his birthday.' Not very enlightening as to Tom Hughes—never heard of him before; but that's neither here nor there, of course."

"Do get on, Miss Pat," urged Judith, folding her napkin. "I've got to get to school sometime this morning, you know."

"Thus admonished, I return to the manuscript," said Patricia gravely. "Where is it? 'His birthday.' Oh, yes. 'Don't you three girls want to go to the matinee with us and have lunch at some swell joint? Write me at once if you can go. We will be in on the eleven-fifteen at the Terminal and have to leave on the 4.30. Yours,' et cetera and so on, and all that

stuff. Hallelujah, good gentleman, what a lark!"

"I think you ought to use better language, Miss Pat, now that you are going to be a sculptor," said Judith severely, and then broke into open delight. "We'll go, won't we, Elinor? We wouldn't disappoint David, would we? On his birthday, too."

"It must be Tom Hughes' birthday," said Elinor. "But whose ever it is, we are going to celebrate, since we're invited. I'll write 'immejit,' as Hannah Ann says."

"But how do you know it isn't David's?" persisted Judith, as she gathered up her letters. "We never asked David when his birthday came, did we?"

Patricia rolled her eyes in mock agony.

"Did it occur to your massive mind that David Francis Edward had a twin sister with whom you were fairly well acquainted?" she asked in smooth and oily tones. "Twins, you know, have a quaint custom of celebrating their birthdays on the same date. Don't swoon, Infant; it

is overpowering news, but you'll get over it in time."

Judith tossed her head, with a little giggle at her own expense.

"I forgot," she said. "I never can remember that you're both the same age. You are always saying that he is so young, Miss Pat."

"So he is," replied Patricia, promptly. "No end younger than I am; but boys are that way. Who's your other letter from, Ju?"

Judith's face assumed a smooth blankness that passed unnoticed by both Elinor and Patricia, now intent on finishing their breakfast and getting off.

"Hannah Ann just says that the house is all right and Henry is as well as usual," she replied, with an uneasy flush on her clear cheek.

"What in the world did Hannah Ann write to you for?" queried Elinor absently. "She usually sends her weekly reports to me."

"She's all right," repeated Judith, with an apprehensive glance at Patricia, who,

however, was entirely oblivious, her attention now being wholly concentrated on her breakfast and Bartine's Tours.

"I must see Mrs. Hudson," said Elinor, rising. "I'll meet you at the Academy, Squibs. Have you your candy all done up? I shan't take my life-class stuff till this afternoon."

"But you've got to turn in the head-class fee this morning, you know," reminded Patricia, coming back from Italy with a jump. "I have my junk all ready, and I'll tell you when I'm going to spring it on them, so you can have a peep at the fun."

"And I won't forget to let you know just when I'm ready to give in mine, so we both can see how they take it," said Elinor from the door.

Patricia laughed as she too rose.

"I'll see to it that you don't forget, miss," she said gayly. "Good-bye, Judy; don't be late for lunch, for it's short and sweet with us real artists. We can't potter over our food like you idle Philistines, you know."

Judith gulped the last mouthful and flung down her napkin.

"I'll be there on time," she promised, eagerly. "Miss Hillis said I could go five minutes earlier, as it was a holiday afternoon. I'll get the rolls and oranges on my way."

"We'll meet you at the door on Charter Street," Elinor reminded her, as she kissed her. "Be sure to be there on time."

"I'll remember," laughed Judith, her anticipation of the delights of lunching at the Academy with grown-up artists shining in her starry eyes. "I'm perfectly crazy over it. I'm going to write all about it in my diary."

"Then we *shall* be handed down to fame!" cried Patricia, giving Judith a very hard squeeze and pinching her thin cheeks into color. "Look us over well, Judy-pudy, and see how much you can make of your two illustrious sisters; for I feel sure that I, for one, will never have a chance to be 'writ up' again."

"Oh, go along, Miss Pat! You'll be awfully late," said Judith, wriggling away, flushed and happy.

Patricia watched, flying up the stairs two steps at a time, and she turned to Elinor, with her hand on the door.

"Ju's a clever young monkey, in spite of her grannified airs," she said, warmly. "If we can only get some of the starch out of her by the time she's old enough to take notice, her dream of being a great writer may come half-way true."

"If she's going to be a writer, she'll drop her dignified pose soon enough," predicted Elinor easily. "She'll be too much interested in other people and things to remember herself too vividly."

"That's so," admitted Patricia readily. "You always hit the nail on the head, old lady. Now I must run. See you later," and closing the door behind her, she ran down the steps and hurried off through the tingling morning air, with her parcel tight under her arm and a kindling light on her mobile face.

"I do hope they like it and won't be too hard on me," she thought, as she hastened on. "It took a lot of trouble to make all the little figures, but if they'll

only let me off from speechifying, I'll feel it was worth it."

There was no one in the modeling room but Naskowski, the silent, heavy-shouldered Slav who toiled early and late making up for his lost youth. Him Patricia held to be as impersonal as any of the other furnishings of the room, and she readily took him into her plan.

"Let's wheel all the stands into a circle around the model stand," she said briskly. "You see, I want them all to get them at once if I can work it. I'll put the figures in under the cloths, beside each head, so they won't show."

Naskowski slowly shook his head.

"They will approach at different times—not? It will be more better to place them during the first rest."

"But how can I?" insisted Patricia. "They don't all go out at the rests, you know."

He held up his finger.

"Listen," he said, impressively. "I make a figure that they all wish to see, but I have not shown him. Well, when

I show him, at the rest, all, *all* go out to the clay room to see."

Patricia clapped her hands.

"And I stay in and slip the figures on the stands! How nice! It's awfully good of you." She broke off with a sudden clouding of her gayety. "But perhaps you don't really want them to see your figure? I couldn't have you——"

He interrupted her with an upheld hand.

"I was to exhibit it today, and I am pleased to be serviceable to a newcomer at once," he said gravely.

Patricia was only too glad to give in. "That makes it perfectly simple, then," she said gratefully. "I'm tremendously obliged to you for helping me out."

"It iss nothing," said Naskowski stolidly as he went back to the clay room, but Patricia could see that he was pleased at the ardor of her gratitude.

"He's an awfully good sort, if he is queer and stubby," she said, pausing to hide her parcel beneath her stand until the propitious moment.

The first half hour seemed longer than

any that Patricia had spent in the modeling room. The students straggled in at various times, and when the gong rang there were still several of the usual number who had not appeared. Naskowski, as the class broke up for the brief interval, found chance to whisper a suggestion that she postpone it till the next rest, and Patricia eagerly agreed.

"I'll go look up my sister and tell her," she said. "We can smuggle her into the clay room, too, to see your work, can't we? I know she'd be crazy to get a glimpse of it, and then she might get a snap-shot at the fun in here."

Naskowski nodded a pleased assent, and Patricia sped away.

She found Elinor perturbed and excited beyond her wont.

"Isn't it horrid? Mr. Benton's come already, and I won't have a chance with my candy before criticism, as I hoped. I don't know what to do about it. I did so want to get it off my mind before I got my criticism, for I'm scared stiff about both of them."

"Why, you goose! Don't you see that it makes it easy for you!" cried Patricia, her eyes dancing. "You can simply put your nice big box of candy on the model stand during a rest, and they won't dare ask you to do any stunts with him in the room."

Elinor laughed helplessly. "I don't know what is the matter with my brain," she said in relieved contempt of her own confusion of mind. "Of course, it is ever so much easier. What a stupid I am not to see it for myself!"

Patricia squeezed her hand surreptitiously. "You're so far up in the clouds these days that the commonplace side of life doesn't exist. You'll be all right after you get used to it," she soothed. "You're going to be pretty free to inhabit cloudland for this winter, and I'm willing to bet any reasonable amount that Hannah Ann will see to it that the housekeeping doesn't distract you next summer. She's perfectly crazy over your painting, since it's like Aunt Louise. And there won't be any boarders or any other money-making schemes this year to harrow our souls."

"It seems too good—after all those years at the boarding schools, and the scrimmage we had when the mortgage was foreclosed—to feel secure at last," said Elinor gratefully. "Everything seems to be heaping up to make us happy."

"Time's up!" cried Patricia, jumping up. "Be on hand at the next rest, angel child. Come in the clay room 'immejit' the gong rings," and she hurried off, humming a gay little song.

The gay little song persisted, much to the dissatisfaction of the severe monitor, Miss Green, whose fat and lugubrious countenance took on a deeper shade of gloom at every hushed note that trembled in Patricia's rounded throat.

After casting a martyr-like glance of reproach at her, as she worked on, all unconscious of the mental agony she was inflicting, Miss Green cleared her throat slushily, and in the most subdued tone possible addressed Patricia.

"Miss Kendall will not disturb the class, I am sure, if she realizes that her humming is a source of annoyance," she said, her own

really musical voice fluting in melodious minor cadences.

Patricia started and looked up with a sunny smile.

"Was I humming?" she asked genially. "I didn't know I was making any noise at all. I'm awfully sorry to have gotten on your nerves. I was thinking about some exercises, and I must have thought out loud."

Miss Green, much mollified by Patricia's ready acknowledgment, beamed over her round spectacles.

"I am sure Miss Kendall has the best intentions possible to any agreeable young lady," she said in a hushed though ceremonious manner.

She paused so long, regarding Patricia with her head on one side, that Patricia was afraid she was going to orate further, and visions of a premature initiation flitted uneasily through her nimble mind. Miss Green, however, said nothing further, taking up her tools and going on with her work with a complacent and benignant smile in her little pink mouth.

Griffin, who was just behind her, winked solemnly at Patricia and then shook her head sadly, as if to indicate that the monitor was in her opinion hopelessly incorrigible.

"Doesn't Greeny make you a bit weary?" she asked, as she slipped over beside Patricia as the gong was about to sound. "She's so drearily ornate."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Patricia easily. "She's kind, anyway. I think if she were thin, people wouldn't find her half bad. Fat people never seem quite as human as the rest of us."

"Stuff!" said Griffin energetically. "She'd be simply awful if she were thin. Aren't you coming in to see Naskowski's lion-tamer? He's showing it in the clay room."

"I'll be along later. I've got something to attend to first," promised Patricia, inwardly quaking lest the other should offer to wait for her; but she went off with the crowd that was hurrying into the clay room, and Patricia was free to arrange her surprise.

Diving under her stand, she fished out

the bundle and opened it with trembling fingers.

"If I can only get them all placed before they come back," she said to herself, as she unwrapped each little bulky parcel. "I hope Naskowski gives me time."

CHAPTER IV

THE INITIATIONS

"WASN'T it the flattest thing you ever saw?" said Patricia, disgustedly, as they waited for Judith at the side door. "I thought it was going off well when Griffin opened the ball by finding her little figure poked away there on the stand back of her head, and made such a cute speech to it, but the rest of them certainly behaved like tame tabbies. I was never so disappointed in my life."

"I thought Miss Green was really quite clever," said Elinor brightly. "She certainly read the verse attached to her's with a lot of expression. I didn't think she could be so sprightly."

Patricia drummed on the railing. "She was well enough," she admitted grudgingly. "But after I had modeled those figures and tried to get something appropriate for each one—and it was hard to get the candy

into the inside of them, too, without spoiling it—they go and accept them as though they were a cup of afternoon tea. I thought they'd show more spirit. Don't talk to me about artists being gay and Bohemian after this."

"It *was* a little quiet," acknowledged Elinor, "but, at least, they were very pleasant about it. They all agreed that it was the cleverest thing that had been done in that line."

Patricia gazed gloomily at the door of the life-class room.

"I wish I were in the night life," she said resentfully. "I envy you, Norn, being among *live* people."

Elinor smiled ruefully. "And I'd like to swap with you," she said. "I'd much prefer a quiet time like I had in the head class this morning, or an agreeable time like you had, to anything riotous."

Patricia sighed and stirred restlessly. "Isn't that like life?" she commented, her face clearing as the thought took hold on her. "We're all hankering after something that we haven't got—or we think we are.

Maybe—maybe we'd not like the other thing any better if we did get it, though one's own things always seem awfully commonplace, don't they?"

Before Elinor could respond, she started to the door with an exclamation.

"Here's Judy! On time to the dot!" she cried. "Come on in, Ju; drop your plunder into my strong arm and let us introduce you to the Academy."

Judith, with her hat rather on one side and her cheeks flushed from the wind and swift walking, kissed them both breathlessly and tumbled her bundles into Patricia's capacious apron.

She followed them into the dressing room with her eyes busy but without a single word, and it was not until they had taken her through the various class rooms, deserted at this noon hour, and were on their way down to the lunch room that she found speech.

"I must say, Elinor," she began, in response to a question, "that it's very different from what you girls led me to expect."

"Did we draw such rosy pictures?" asked Patricia in surprise. "I thought we told you it was remarkably spotty and just as smelly."

"*But*," continued Judith with emphasis, "I must say that, dirt and all, it is more *glorious-ified* than I thought it would be. That big-winged angel or whatever it is at the top of the stairs looks as if it would soar right up to the top of heaven—it's so white and strong!"

Patricia's eyes filled with the ready tears as she caught the look on Judith's thin face, raised in adoring admiration to the great Winged Victory that stood poised at the top of the wide flight of stone stairs, showing triumphant in the misty light that seems to fill all great indoor spaces.

"That's the part that makes up for all the soil and smudge, Ju darling," said Elinor softly. "Paint and charcoal and clay are dirty things, but when they're wielded with the force of an Ideal, they can illuminate the world."

Judith swept her adoring gaze from the Victory to her sister's face.

"Oh, oh," she breathed, "I didn't know you could talk like that, Elinor. It sounds like some beautiful book."

Elinor blushed and laughed. "I can't, usually," she said, gayly. "It is the Victory that did it. She must have handed down some of the thoughts of the old Greek that carved her out of the white marble under that blue, blue sky of ancient days."

Patricia nodded her quick appreciation. "I wonder how many she has spoken to, in all the centuries?" she mused, her eyes growing wide and absent. "Think of them, Norn—those people who felt her spell and heard the message. What a glorious company!"

It was Elinor's turn to raise misty eyes to the Messenger of the Ideal, and, like Judith, she was silent, busy with this thought.

"Do you know," Patricia went on, the peculiarly sweet, clear tone that marked her best self growing as she spoke, "I've come to care a lot about that glorious company. 'The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it,' and I don't see

why we all shouldn't have some chance to add our tiny scrap to the splendor. I know I shan't ever do much—only commonplace, humdrum things, but if I can come at last with the least, tiniest bit of a radiant snip to add to the glory and honor, I'll be more than satisfied."

She broke off suddenly, smiling a wistful smile at the two others.

"I oughtn't to envy you, but I do," she said, softly. "You'll both come in simply glittering, and I'll have to brag that you're my near relatives. I'm such an ostentatious beast that I'd have to show off even there."

"Patricia!" gasped Judith, shocked out of her dreamy calm. "You oughtn't to say things like that. It's—it's not religious!"

Patricia dropped back instantly to her usual manner.

"Well, anyway, I'm fearfully hungry," she said airily. "I can't stand any more palaver. Come along to the cave and let us feed while there is time."

Luncheon was particularly gay, much to Judith's delight. Margaret Howes joined

them, and Griffin with a kindred spirit had the next table. Doris Leighton, the pretty girl whom Patricia had so ardently admired on her first day and who had not been visible since then, appeared without her pale companion, and took the table on the other side of them, and when Margaret Howes, at Patricia's entreaty, introduced them, she brought her chair over to their table and made one of their merry party.

Judith was silent for the most part, but her eyes glowed like live coals and she kept tossing her pale, straight mane in the way she had when pleasantly excited.

"Well, what do you think of Bohemia?" asked Griffin, as they climbed the narrow iron stair again, the time having come for Judith to say good-bye.

Judith was equal to the occasion, as usual.

"I like it better than the land of the Amorites and the Hittites," she responded so promptly that the other gaped.

"Upon my word, you're a classy young 'un," she grinned. "Come again soon and give us some more."

Patricia as she carried Judith off to the

dressing room for her wraps, was moved to inquiry.

"How in the world could you answer her so pat?" she asked, twinkling at Judith's superior air.

"Oh, I heard you say this morning that outside people were Philistines, and when I tried to look it up in the Old Testament, I read a lot of hard names, and I remembered them," she said, triumphantly. "I didn't think, though, that I'd be able to use them so soon."

Patricia shook her head.

"You certainly are the limit," she said, gravely. "What makes you care so much about words and names and such like things?" she asked, trying to get at a clearer understanding of her little sister's mental processes.

Judith was entirely unconscious of the probe.

"Why, because they're the very nicest things in the world, of course," she replied spiritedly. "I love to get new ones and see how they work. It's such fun. Like archery practice, when you hit the bull's

eye. Only words are somehow different, too. They sort of *taste* when you say them—sometimes sweet and sometimes tingly and queer, like the Amorites and Hittites," and she giggled at the memory.

Patricia shook her head.

"Don't go tasting too many new ones around here," she cautioned with a kiss. "You might hit on the wrong one, and they wouldn't understand that it was merely a game with you."

"Well, I just guess it isn't any game," retorted Judith with a toss of her mane. "It's the most important thing in life to me," and she stalked off towards the door with great dignity.

Patricia groaned as she watched her walk primly down the corridor and out of the side entrance. "That infant," she said to Elinor who had been leaving Judith out, "is trembling on the brink of becoming a little prig. We've got to see to it, Norn, that she doesn't get too satisfied with herself."

"I don't believe she'll get spoiled," returned Elinor, easily. "She *is* clever,

you know, and I think it's rather nice that she can enjoy it a bit. She isn't pretty, and it makes up to her for that."

"All the same," said Patricia, darkly, "she needs to drop a peg in her own esteem. Conceit is mighty crippling to the runner in the race that Ju's picked out for herself. I'd hate her to be a fizzle, and I'm going to see to it that she gets rid of it."

"Very well; only don't be too hard on her," said Elinor, easily. "Come help me with the candy for the night life, won't you? I can't get it in shape."

"Lots of time for it," said Patricia, yawning and flinging herself down on the wide couch. "The men aren't through in there for more than an hour yet."

"But I've got to get it tied inside the lantern while no one is about," insisted Elinor. "And the hall is absolutely deserted now. Come along, do, and be useful."

Patricia, protesting, dragged herself from the restful nest, but by the time they had begun to arrange the gay little bags of candy in the big red Japanese lantern, she was as enthusiastic as Elinor could wish.

"Aren't the bags perfect ducks?" she laughed, handling the gauzy bundles with dexterous fingers. "And those verses are too cute for words. What a time we all had over them! Ju's are the best, though she mustn't know it; funny without being personal. It was terribly hard to get such a mob, too. How many are there altogether, Norn?"

"Seventeen," replied Elinor, counting. "I hope it will work all right when I pull the string. I've fixed the bottom of that lantern so it ought to fall out when I give a hard jerk, and all the bags will tumble down in a shower."

"You can't try it, of course," said Patricia. "But I'm dead certain it'll be all right. What is the matter?" she asked, looking up as the door of the life room opened and the men began to come out carrying their canvases and drawing-boards as though the pose were over. "It can't be four o'clock, surely. Ju hasn't been gone a half hour."

Naskowski, on his way to the modeling room, paused to answer Patricia's question.

"There iss a demonstration in the living anatomy, for all students—a man who can dislocate his joints at will and do other methods of showing muscle action," he explained. "So the life iss dismiss. You will come—not?"

Patricia and Elinor exchanged a swift glance.

"We'll be along in a little while," replied Patricia easily. "Save a seat for us if you can."

When he had moved on she whispered excitedly:

"Now's your chance, Norn! I'll skirmish for laggards and report."

She came back in a moment, triumphant.

"There isn't a soul in sight," she announced. "Hustle while the coast's clear. Someone may come back at any moment."

They hurried into the deserted room, and with eager haste they swung the big lantern up to the circle of electric fixtures above the model stand, the stout cord that Elinor had fastened to its bottom hanging concealed among the drapery of the screen that stood behind the model's chair.

"It's all ship-shape now," whispered Patricia as they scrambled down from the stools whereon they had perched to accomplish their purpose. "Aren't we in luck? Not a soul even saw us come in."

"Now for a sight of the dislocated gentleman," said Elinor gayly. "And then for the great event."

The anatomical wonder appealed to them so little that they gave up the seats that the kind Slav had saved for them, and went out, rather sickened by such limberness, to wait the gong of the night life in the seclusion of the print room.

The hall and corridor were dim and the circle of lights above the model stand was twinkling brightly when Patricia peeped in at the crack of the door during the first rest.

"Nothing seems to be happening," said Elinor to her in an undertone as she joined her. "I believe I'll wait till later, unless I see signs of action."

"Don't keep me hanging on here in the dark too long," protested Patricia. "I'm worn to a bone already."

When she returned to her post after a

brief nap on the wide couch, everything was quiet, much to her disgust.

"Why in the world doesn't Elinor loosen up?" she thought, impatiently.

As she moved nearer she gave a start of surprise. The lights in the night-life room were out. The transom showed black and empty above the massive folded doors.

Patricia drew in her breath with a gasp. She put her hand on the knob of the door and noiselessly turned it.

"I'll slip in behind the door screen," she thought, "and see what's going on. Elinor may need me."

CHAPTER V

THE GHOST DANCE

THE room was very dark at first, and little whispers ran all about in the gloom. There was a rustling and shuffling and a sound of hurried, muffled steps. Patricia, from her hiding place behind the door screen, could make out nothing but the dim oblong of the transom above her head and the long pale mass of the skylight.

Suddenly a match flared and the twinkling tip of light grew at a candle end and she saw a ghostly figure, its white hand busy with the candle wick and its hollow, black eyes fixed on the tiny growing flame. Instantly other matches flickered and more candles glimmered in ghostly fingers, until the room was flashing with tiny points of light, while the masses of heavy shadow trembled and surged about an array of white-clad, mysterious, skull-faced figures

that slowly formed in line and, two by two, moved to the center of the room, chanting a low, monotonous song as they walked in solemn procession.

"My word!" breathed Patricia, stirred and chilled in spite of herself. "They're doing it brown this time!"

As her eyes grew accustomed to the flicker and motion, she searched for Elinor, and saw her at last, the center of the weird procession, standing quietly beside the chair from which she had risen, holding her head with a sweet and gracious dignity that went straight to Patricia's chilled heart.

"Dear old Norn," she thought with a returning glow. "They can't scare her, bless her heart!"

Elinor stood smiling a little at the gruesome company as they slowly paced about her in a narrowing circle, and when the leader took her hand and led her to the model stand, motioning to her to mount it, she acquiesced with graceful alacrity.

Standing high above them in the semi-gloom, with that faint smile still on her lips, she watched them calmly as they

danced the famous Ghost Dance of the Academy about her, omitting no gruesome detail that would be calculated to affright the dismayed beholder, chanting and groaning horribly the while.

At a sign from the leader the dance stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and the leader once more approached Elinor, followed by four of the foremost ghosts.

They mounted the platform and, seating Elinor in the chair, filed before her, presenting one after another a grisly hand and cadaverous cheek for her salute.

"The horrid things!" murmured Patricia to herself, with her wrath beginning to rise. "I'd pinch their noses for them if they made me kiss them! Elinor's too gentle with them. I wonder why she doesn't pull the string? She could reach it easily now."

But Elinor, far from showing rancor, shook the bony hands and kissed the sunken cheeks with as good grace as though she were receiving her dearest friends. She even made some little speech to each, though Patricia was too far away to catch more than a word or two.

Her sweetness of temper, nevertheless, did not seem to appease the ghosts, for, when the ceremony of salutation was finished, the four seated themselves cross-legged on either side of her, while the leader proceeded to catechize her.

"What is you name?" she asked, in a high, squeaking voice that Patricia failed to recognize.

Elinor responded promptly.

"Where do you live?" was the next question, to which Elinor again replied good-naturedly.

"Pooh! they're as stupid as the rest," thought Patricia contemptuously, and she let her attention wander, studying the various ghosts, making mental notes as to height and size for future reference.

She was brought back to the center of interest by a sharp hiss from a ghost on the edge of the assembly and a muffled cry of "No fair!" from another nearer the stand.

The leader raised a grisly hand and swept the assembly with her cavernous eye sockets.

"I repeat," she piped, turning to Elinor with a jerky bow, "I repeat my question. Why were you admitted to our class without having worked in any antique or life classes before?"

"Oh, that's too personal," said a ghost in a disgusted tone. "I protest! This isn't a Board meeting."

There was a general murmur of laughter at this, but the leader stood rigid, awaiting Elinor's reply.

"I have told anyone who asked me," said Elinor, evenly, though her cheeks were beginning to burn. "I came in on Bruce Haydon's recommendation."

There was a rustle of approval at her quiet tone and a stir as of the assembly breaking up, but again the leader motioned for silence.

"The other four sisters will make their investigation after I have finished," she announced in her shrill tones. "I have but three more questions to put to the novice."

There was a silence that made the next question come with more insulting force,

while Patricia again wondered why Elinor did not seize this moment for her broadside of bonbons.

"How much," squeaked the leader, more shrilly than ever, "did Bruce Haydon bribe the Board to let you in?"

Instantly there was a storm of hisses and protests; the four next inquisitors jumped to their feet and down from the model stand with one motion, crying that it was a shame that the fun was spoiled and that they had all had enough for one night.

"Initiation's over!" shouted someone in a voice of authority, and suddenly the candle-lights vanished into a tumultuous darkness, while there was a confusion of scurrying noises that made Patricia's head swim for a moment.

Then the lights flashed on, and she saw clearly the disheveled, excited assembly hastily hiding bundles of white cloth in any available spot, while hair and dress were hurriedly arranged and order generally restored. Elinor still stood on the model stand under the brilliant circle of

lights, her wide eyes gleaming and her head uplifted.

"I haven't been asked for a speech," she began clearly. "But I do want to say a word or two, if you'll let me."

She paused for some sign, and Patricia in her corner was delighted at the Babel which answered her. Cries of "Of course we will!" "*Dee-lighted!*" "Take all the time you want!" mingled with applause and stamping, until Elinor could not forbear a laugh.

"I won't wear out your patience," she promised, as quiet was restored and her voice could again be heard. "I haven't any oration to deliver. I only want to say that I don't know who it was asked me those questions, and I hope I never shall know. You've all been very kind to me, and I'd hate to think that any of you wanted to make me uncomfortable. I'm sure it was simply an initiation stunt, and I for one shall never think of it again."

She paused with a bright, friendly glance on the upturned faces.

"This is my real introduction to the

night-life class," she said, with a sweeping gesture that, unseen to all but the anxious Patricia, caught the cord from its hiding place among the draperies. "And I want this evening to be a sweet memory to us all."

She stepped aside with a swift movement, and the big red lantern swayed and threatened to topple as the cord tightened.

"Why, what's that?" cried a voice, and all eyes were turned to the gaudy swaying globe. Before anyone could speak, Elinor gave another hard tug, tearing out the bottom of the lantern, and down came the shower of gay little gauze bags with their cargoes of bonbons, pell-mell on the heads of the crowd!

"Hallelujah! It's the fee!" cried Griffin, with a green and gold packet in her hands. "Hurrah for Kendall Major! She's the stuff!"

"Verses, too!" cried Margaret Howes. "Verses on every one of them. Read them aloud, everybody in turn. Hurry up and get them all together."

"Silence, will you?" shouted Griffin,

pounding like mad. "Keep still till the exercises are over. The first little girl to speak her piece is Miss Doris Leighton. Come up, Doris, dear. Don't put your finger in your mouth, and speak so we can all hear you. Fire away."

Patricia thought Doris Leighton looked pale as she stood up on the model stand to read the nonsense verse that was on her candy bag, but her loveliness wrought the same spell on the others as it always had, and they listened to her silvery voice in appreciative silence, and applauded her warmly at the end.

One after another, the girls mounted the stand beside Elinor, and read the little verses, while the assembly listened, and even the model, decorously cloaked, came from her little room, and with her crocheting in hand sat smiling at the nonsense.

When the last verse had been read and the laughter died down, Griffin raised her voice again.

"Nobody's asked me for a speech," she began and paused.

"Didn't think you had to be asked," came from the crowd in a laughing voice.

Griffin looked sadly in the direction of the voice.

"Nobody's asked me," she repeated more firmly, "and so I'm not going to make any. So there!"

Groans of relief sounded from the side of the room whence the voice had come, and there was a general giggle.

"I merely raised my voice above the general clamor," Griffin went on with an icy stare towards her hidden critic, "to suggest that we show our appreciation of the delightful entertainment Miss Kendall has so thoughtfully provided us by giving her the Night Life Song, or the Academy Howl, whichever she prefers." She bowed to Elinor with exaggerated politeness. "Which shall it be, Miss Kendall? Each is equally diverting, but the Howl has the merit of greater brevity. No extra charge for the choice, you know, so speak up and name it."

Elinor glanced about at the circle of laughing, friendly faces and her eyes shone.

"I'll choose the song," she announced, gayly. "I've heard a lot of howling already this evening."

"The song it is," cried Griffin, stepping on a chair and beginning to beat time with a big paint-brush. "Now then, all together, my children. Warble!"

Patricia, thrilled by the sweetness of the rippling, crooning song, and before the verse was half done, joined unconsciously in with the others, forgetting the need of words in the melody of the lilting song.

"Creatures of the night are we,
Sisters of the glow-worm dim,
Comrades of the hooting owl,
Toilers when the sunset's rim
Overflows with shadows deep;
Harken to our even-song,
Night it is that makes us strong."

The chorus swelled, with Griffin's thrilling treble soaring high and clear:

"Glorious night that makes us strong,
Drowning day and ending strife;
Guide the skilful hand and eye,
Shape our efforts into life."

Patricia's heart beat hard with the beauty of the woven word and melody, and she gave a little gulp to keep back the tears that sprang so readily.

"I didn't dream those uproarious creatures could be so serious. I wonder where they got that song," she said to herself as she slipped unnoticed out into the twilight of the corridor.

She put the question to Griffin when she met her in the hall after the class had broken up in disorder to celebrate the initiation by a general gambol through the deserted halls and corridors. Patricia and Griffin were seating themselves on a drawing-board at the top of the short flight of stone steps that connected the back corridor with the exhibition rooms above.

"That? Oh, Carol Lawton wrote that for us before she left. She was a corker, I can tell you." A shade flitted over Griffin's face as she settled herself more firmly on the board. "She died last fall, and we've sung that song ever since. Ready now! Let her *go!*"

Away they sped down the stony stairs

with a great clatter of board and flutter of skirts, winding up at the bottom with a final heavy thump.

"Phew! That's great!" cried Patricia, springing lightly to her feet. "It's more like flying than anything else."

"Yes, it's going some," returned Griffin nonchalantly, as she started up the stair again, dragging the board after her. "The March Hare originated it back in the dark ages, and we've been doing it off and on—when the authorities don't get on to us."

"The March Hare?" queried Patricia, much elated by this exhilarating society, and wishing more ardently than ever that she were fitted for this fascinating class.

Griffin nodded. "Tabby March, you know. The young woman who paints pussies. Used to go here three years ago, before she'd arrived. She was a wild one, I can tell you."

"Do you mean Elizabeth March, who got the Tassel prize this year?" asked Patricia in surprise. "Why, I saw her last week at the exhibition and she was awfully prim looking."

Griffin chuckled. "It's fame that tames them, mark my words. Soon's they get known they grow into a pattern. Ready now. Let her r-r-r-*rip!*"

Elinor intercepted them at the bottom just as they were preparing for a third flight.

"I've been looking for you everywhere, Miss Pat," she said radiantly. "There's going to be a spread in the cave, and I've phoned home to Judy not to wait for us, as we won't be there for dinner."

"Am I asked?" demanded Patricia with eager eyes.

"Of course, or I'd have sent word by you instead of phoning," said Elinor quickly. "Come along down, both of you. Everything is ready, and Margaret Howes is making Welsh rarebit just specially for you—she heard you say you adored it. Hurry, hurry."

CHAPTER VI

AFTERMATH

THE feast was half over when Patricia, who sat between Margaret Howes and Griffin and opposite to the adorable Doris Leighton, got a distinct shock.

The girls had been talking of the initiation and the part that Elinor had played.

"Your sister has covered herself with glory by the way she took her hazing," said Margaret, deftly winding a long string of the rarebit around a bread stick and popping it in her mouth.

"She certainly saved us from a fluke by the nice fashion in which she turned the popular attention from that idiot who was leading the band," added Griffin, reaching for the mustard.

Patricia longed to ask a question, but Margaret Howes saved her the necessity.

"Who was it, do you know, Griffin?" she inquired in a lowered tone.

"Can't be certain, of course, but I have my doubts," replied Griffin, in the same pitch. "I think that I recognized the silvery tones of a fair one who is not too far away from us," and she glanced significantly across the table to where Doris Leighton sat with the candle-light shining in her bright hair and a little smile curving her pink lips.

Patricia caught the look, and was instantly both astonished and indignant.

"I don't see how you can think that!" she cried hotly, and then hastily lowering her voice, she added: "You must have known who they chose for leader, even if you both were at the tail of the march."

Griffin grinned good-naturedly. "Keep your righteous wrath for the right fellow, young 'un. When you've been in the night life as many years as I have, you'll know that we don't choose a leader—she simply elects herself by taking the head of the procession. We never know who's who after we rig up. That's part of the

game. So, you see, it may have been the charming Doris, or Howes here, or my unworthy self, that put those obnoxious questions to your sister—no one knows for sure, and the mean cuss won't tell."

"Why should she want to be horrid to Elinor?" persisted Patricia, frowning a little in her earnestness. "We don't know her very well yet, but she's been perfectly sweet to us both."

"That describes her to a T, doesn't it, Howes?" grinned the imperturbable Griffin. "That's the way we find her—so sweet that she is sickening, eh?"

"Hush, she'll hear you!" warned Howes, laughing a little, nevertheless, whereupon Patricia instantly decided that she had been mistaken in Margaret Howes' character, and that she was less open-minded and warm-hearted than she had believed.

"I can't see why you should pitch on her," insisted Patricia, kneading her cake into pills in her agitation. "What could she have against Elinor?"

Griffin yawned elaborately and then

addressed Margaret Howes with lifted eyebrows.

"This young person, though evidently of an investigating turn of mind, has not quite fathomed the nature of the reigning beauty of our little coterie. Being of a candid and affable nature herself, she fails to comprehend how the fangs of the green-eyed monster, once fastened in the tender heart of said beauty, make the said beauty so mortally uncomfy that she's bound to take it out on somebody—and who so natural or convenient as the critter who sicked the serpent on her."

"You mean that she is jealous of Elinor?" asked Patricia, opening her eyes very wide. "Why, Elinor is only a beginner, and *she's* studied abroad!"

"All the same, she sees that Kendall Major is about to snatch the laurel wreath from all our heads, and she doesn't want to do without any of her ornaments."

"But Elinor didn't even get a criticism in the head class yet," protested Patricia, unconvinced. "Mr. Benton didn't get around to her this morning, and she

doesn't get any criticism in the night life till tomorrow afternoon. I don't see how she could be jealous."

Griffin made a face over a sip of overheated cocoa. "Just as you please," she murmured benevolently. "Make the best of it, like a good child. Charity is the chief Christian virtue and an ornament to all. Are you going in for the prize design, Howes? I hear that it's open to the whole class."

"Haven't heard of it," replied Margaret Howes, with eager interest. "What is it? And who's giving it?"

"Roberts, the big New York decorator. He's offering a hundred dollars for the best design for a panel for a library—originality to be the chief feature. Popsy Brown told me. I thought it had been announced."

"It wasn't on the bulletin board this afternoon," said a girl across the table, who had been listening to this last speech. "Tell us about it, Griffie dear. We're all dying to hear."

"Spout it out loud!" called another from the end of the table. "We can't catch your muffled accents down here."

The announcement of the prize was received with such lively interest that it routed all other subjects, and even Patricia caught the enthusiasm.

"I hope Elinor tries for it," she said excitedly. "She'll say she's too green, I suppose."

"Tell her to make a hack at it anyway," urged Margaret Howes earnestly. "Originality is the thing that counts, and she's got as good a chance as any of us there."

"Better," said Griffin tersely. "We're so filled with other people's ideas that we've degenerated into regular copy-cats. I can't undertake any subject but that I have a lot of designs by famous painters popping into my mind and mixing me up horribly."

"I wish I could draw," mused Patricia, absently sugaring her Frankfurter. "I've got tons of ideas already."

"That reminds me," broke out Griffin. "There's a prize for the mud larks, too. I've forgotten what it is, but it'll be posted in the morning. There's your chance, young 'un. You're eligible for it."

Patricia was about to speak, but there

was a general stir and a voice cried, authoritatively:

"Eight o'clock. Time to break up! Three cheers for Kendall Major and her candy toys. The Academy Howl, ladies, if you please!"

A space was hurriedly cleared at the other end of the table, a chair placed and Patricia saw Elinor, blushing and protesting, thrust into it by a dozen laughing students.

Patricia stood to one side, as they formed a hasty group in the open space by the door, and, with Griffin beating time, stretched their mouths to the utmost and gave the Academy Howl with a vim that was deafening, drawing out the final deep growling notes to a weirdly wailing finish that sent Patricia and Elinor into gales of mirth.

"How in the world did you make up such an unearthly yodel?" demanded Elinor, preparing to descend from her chair of state. "I hope I'm not expected to answer in kind."

"You don't budge from there, young lady, till you've given us a song," declared

Griffin, vigorously. "We know your dark secrets. We've heard that you can warble a bit."

Elinor sat down in surprise. "Oh, but I can't," she protested. "I can't sing at all. Miss Pat——"

A glare from Patricia stopped her, but it was too late. A chorus of laughing voices took up the demand, "A song, Miss Pat!" "Don't be stingy, Kendall Minor; tune up!" "Give us a sample, Miss Pat!" until Griffin, with a bow, offered her arm to the rebellious Patricia and led her, protesting and abashed, to the chair whence Elinor had escaped.

Once on the impromptu platform, Patricia's embarrassment dropped from her, and she smiled a ready acknowledgment to the shouts that demanded a dozen different songs at once.

"I can't sing them all at once," she said, gayly. "But if you'll settle on one that I know, I'll do my best for you. You've given me an awfully good time tonight, and I'm only too glad to sing for you."

After a great deal of good-humored bick-

ering and sifting of requests to suit Patricia's repertoire, the tumult gradually quieted and Patricia rose.

"I'll sing 'Mary of Argyle' first, and then a new little song, but it won't sound very well without any accompaniment," she said simply, and then, folding her hands before her and tilting her head like a bird, she began to sing, softly at first and then louder till her voice soared and rang echoing through the bare, empty rooms that flanked the lunch rooms.

"I have watched thy heart, my Mary,
And its goodness was the wile,
That has made me thine forever,
Bonnie Mary of Argyle."

Patricia's voice swelled and sank on the last lines of the old song, and the girls broke into hearty applause, which was startlingly reinforced from the doorway of the lumber cellar. The janitor's sallow face appeared from the gloom and his deep voice boomed an encore.

"Fine! Fine!" he cried, nodding his

head approvingly. "That beats them all! My wife, she used to sing that song, and I liked it fine, but you beat them all!"

Patricia blushed with pleasure, and Griffin called out heartily, "Bring her in, Eitel. There's going to be another!"

As the janitor padded away to the domestic portion of the basement to fetch his smiling wife, Griffin added to Patricia, "They're an awfully good sort. You don't mind, do you?"

"No, indeed!" cried Patricia. "It's sweet of them to like it!"

Doris Leighton smiled at Elinor in the crowd and murmured a word of praise for the singing, adding, however, that she was afraid that the janitor could hardly appreciate it.

"What's that?" asked Griffin, whose quick ear had caught the last words. "Not appreciate it? Why, do you know that Eitel used to be butler for Patti in his youth? Fie, fie, my child; likewise, go to."

Patricia caught her breath. "I hope he likes the next one," she said anxiously, whereat Griffin chuckled.

"Don't be too scared," she said in a quick undertone. "It's forty years since he served the Diva, and he only stayed a month. I merely exploited him musically to bluff off the Class Beauty. Hush! here they are, large as life. Now, warble your prettiest, for Mrs. Eitel really knows good stuff when she hears it."

So Patricia flung her whole self into the sparkling "April Girl," and at the finish had the reward of an ovation. The students clapped and the Eitels applauded with hands and feet, and cried "Encore!" till they were red in the face.

"I'll sing just one more, and then I'll have to stop," she said with eager brightness. "My voice isn't strong enough to do much, you know, though I'm awfully glad you like the songs."

So she sang another, a lullaby, that sank to its finish in flattering silence. Not a word was spoken as she stepped to the floor, but Elinor put out her hand and gave Patricia's a hard squeeze.

Mrs. Eitel broke the silence. "That music has made me strong," she declared,

beaming. "These dishes I will now wash up for the reward of those songs. Go along now, young ladies, and think nothing about the disorder and the scrappishness, for it is I who will make them to come to order."

There were a few feeble protests, but Mrs. Eitel bore them down, and the students trooped off upstairs to their lockers and the dressing room, well pleased to escape the prosaic end to their fun.

On the way home Patricia told Elinor of the suspicions that had been whispered about Doris Leighton's part in the initiation, and, much to her satisfaction, Elinor was as indignant as she had been.

"I can't see how they can be so unfriendly to her," she said warmly. "She is so kind and agreeable. Of course, she doesn't associate with everybody, but neither does Margaret Howes nor Griffin either, for that matter. So far from being jealous, she's been specially sociable with me, and I felt quite flattered by it."

"I knew you'd feel just that way about it," said Patricia, relieved and triumphant.

"I told them she'd been awfully sweet to us."

"I think it more likely that it was Griffin herself," said Elinor with spirit. "She's such a wild, harum-scarum thing, and she does love to tease."

Patricia was silent, weighing this suggestion. They both broke into negation at once as they reached their own front door.

"It couldn't be Griffin," said Patricia earnestly. "She was too disgusted with it."

"No, I didn't really mean that," cried Elinor, repentantly. "It wasn't a bit like her teasing. Her's always has a good flavor."

"I wonder who it could have been," they both murmured as they went upstairs to their rooms.

Judith was deeply interested with their recital of the whole affair, and grew quite excited in the discussion as to the identity of the leader of the Ghost Dance.

"If I were there enough to know the different girls, I'd know who it was without much trouble," she declared.

"How would you manage it, Sherlock?" asked Patricia. "Give us a hint of your method, and we may be able to locate the fiend ourselves."

Judith tossed her head.

"Oh, you may laugh, Miss Pat. But all the same, I'd *know*. I could tell by the little things that you grown-ups don't notice."

"Mercy, Judy!" cried Patricia in genuine consternation. "You mustn't examine us all with your private microscope. It isn't fair!"

Elinor put an end to the discussion by pointing to the clock.

"Do you see the hour, infants?" she demanded. "Tomorrow is a full day, and we must get to our beds. Toddle, Judy dear. If you aren't asleep in ten minutes you'll have to take a nap in the afternoon."

"Oh, but Miss Jinny's coming at five, and David won't leave till half-past four!" protested Judith, horrified at such a prospect, and beginning to scramble out of her clothes with lively haste. "And you promised to show me the night-life room,

too, when all the students were there and the model wasn't posing! Oh, dear Elinor, you're a very agitating person! I'm twice as wide-awake as I was a minute ago!"

When Elinor and Patricia were alone, Patricia opened the subject that had been occupying her thought for the last few minutes.

"You'll try for that library panel prize, won't you, Norn?" she asked, pleadingly. "Griffin and Margaret Howes both say you ought. I know you could do something worth while."

Elinor paused in her hair brushing, and sank down on the stool, absently propping her chin on her brush.

"It doesn't seem worth while," she began, but Patricia broke in impatiently:

"You never know what you can do till you try. I'd try for anything I was eligible for, if I couldn't draw a stroke, just to be in with the rest."

Elinor smiled and pulled Patricia down beside her on the stool.

"Don't be too hard on your lazy old sister, Miss Pat," she said with a kiss.

"I'll promise to go in for it if you won't scold any more. If I disgrace the family, you mustn't cast it up to me."

Patricia tossed her bright head scornfully.

"'Disgrace!'" she repeated hotly. "Why, do you know, Elinor Kendall, that they're all saying *already* that you're a wonder?" Then with a swift change, she broke into a giggle. "Wait till you lay eyes on my contribution to the modeling competition. You'll have the treat of your young life then!"

"What's it to be?" asked Elinor, releasing her and beginning to braid her dark hair.

"Don't know," replied Patricia gayly. "Don't care, either. Whatever it is, I'm going into it tooth and nail. I'll show them that I'm on the turf even if I can't win a ribbon."

Judith's voice came plaintively from her room.

"I don't think it's fair," she faltered. "You girls keep chattering so I can't go to sleep, and the ten minutes are up long ago."

"Bless your heart, Infant, you're a martyr to our long tongues!" cried Patricia, jumping up and putting out the light. "Go to sleep now. We won't chirp a single note. Good-night, and happy dreams!"

CHAPTER VII

DAVID'S TREAT

"I HAVEN'T had my criticism yet, and if I don't get it next pose, you'll have to go to the station without me," said Elinor to the other two girls as she met them in the corridor the next morning. "Mr. Benton's awfully slow, but I can't miss this first criticism, you know."

"David'll be fearfully disappointed," remarked Judith dispassionately. "It's his first family spree, and I think it's your duty to go, Elinor."

"Oh, I'll be through in time for the luncheon" said Elinor, hastily. "But if I'm not out here by eleven-fifteen, you'd better start without me. I can meet you somewhere, or you all can come over here for me."

Doris Leighton, passing, stopped for a gay word with Patricia and Judith as they

loitered in the hall. She made a laughing little gesture of envy when she heard their program for the day, which Patricia, eager to make amends for the unspoken slight upon her, poured out generously.

"What fun it will be," she said, with the faintest tinge of sadness in her lovely voice. "It must be splendid to have a brother! I have always so longed for one."

Patricia caught herself in the act of offering her a share in David Francis, but remembering his cold criticism of other attractive girls in the past, closed her lips in time.

"We didn't have one till this winter," she said cheerfully. "So I guess we appreciate him for all he's worth."

Doris Leighton's pretty eyes widened. "What in the world do you mean?" she asked with such real interest that Patricia gladly rushed into the tale of the kidnaping of her five-year-old twin brother, and how he had been given up as dead for all the long years until the chance discovery of his identity revealed him to them at the very time when they were most in need of him.

She did not dwell on the financial reinforcement that he brought to them, feeling instinctively that the knowledge of their straitened means would lower them in Doris Leighton's estimation, but drew a lively picture of the jolly Christmas party they had had at Greycroft, and the happy future they were looking forward to in their life together.

"He's at Prep now, but he'll enter Yale next year," she ended proudly. "He's awfully clever, though he doesn't show it. He behaves just as silly and stupid as other boys most of the time."

"He must be a nice boy," returned the Class Beauty, with lagging interest and a shade of condescension in her manner. "Of course, he's young yet. I thought he was Kendall Major's twin."

Judith, who had been scanning her narrowly, opened her eyes at this, and asked innocently, "Is that why you thought you'd like him? Because he was older and more grown-up?"

Doris Leighton laughed a rippling laugh that had no shade of the annoyance which

Patricia felt rise hotly at Judith's rather pert question.

"Bless you, no, child," she said lightly. "I merely thought he would be more apt to be like your oldest sister, whom I admire tremendously, as everyone knows."

Patricia could scarcely wait till Miss Leighton was out of earshot.

"What in the world made you so disagreeable?" she demanded of the unconcerned Judith. "Any blind bat could see that you wanted to be nasty, in spite of your namby-pamby airs."

Judith merely smiled her superior smile. "I know more about Miss Doris Leighton than you think," she said, nonchalantly. "Her little sister is in my class at school, and I just got acquainted with her yesterday."

Patricia stamped her foot in vexation. "What *do* you mean?" she cried. "You're the most exasperating——"

The words died on her tongue, as Elinor suddenly emerged from the portrait class door, her face radiant and with an exclamation of quick pleasure at the sight of them.

"I got my criticism! And he said the work was good! Now I can write to Bruce," and her voice rang with a thrilling note of joy that carried Patricia with her.

"Good old Norn!" she cried, with a mighty hug. "I told you that you were the real stuff! Ju and I are mighty proud of our big sister, aren't we, Ju?"

Judith caught Elinor's hand, and pressed close, silently adoring.

"You girls are angels to wait for me till the very last moment," chatted Elinor, stuffing her things into her locker recklessly. "I hated to run the risk of not going to the station, but, oh, it was worth it!"

Patricia watched her with studious eyes as she pinned on her hat and hurried into her wraps, holding forth the while in an exultation most unusual to her.

"You're 'fair lifted,' aren't you, Norn?" she asked curiously. "I didn't know you ever got so daffy over anything. I've never seen you if you have."

Judith looked wise. "I know how she feels," she declared, sagely. "I get awfully excited when I write something good.

Why, sometimes I cry, I'm so happy about it, and I jump up and down. too, all by myself."

Patricia grinned. "You two geniuses understand each other, I see. Might a humdrum mortal remind you that David is just about sliding into the train shed at this moment?"

"Mercy! Are we so late?" exclaimed Elinor, remorsefully. "Hurry, Judith. Don't wait for me. I'll catch up to you before you get to the corner."

Off they raced, and came panting into the station, to find the express ten minutes late, and David just stepping from the platform of the still moving line of cars.

Patricia, who denounced recklessness in others, flew to meet him with loud reproaches, regardless of the thronging crowd of undergraduates that were nimbly springing off after him.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, David Carson!" she cried, her big gray eyes alight and a pretty flush on her cheeks. "You'll simply *kill* yourself some day, that's

what you'll do! Why can't you wait till it stops?"

David, grinning broadly, cast a rather sheepish glance at the hurrying throng.

"Fellows were in a hurry," he explained good-naturedly, as he shook hands with a grip that made her wince. "Couldn't keep you girls waiting, anyway. Hullo, Elinor, how's the artist lady? Hullo, kid, give us your paw. Don't need to ask you how you are—you look out of sight."

Judith as she kissed him was wrinkling her smooth brows at him. "But I thought you were going to bring Tom Hughes——" she began, hesitatingly.

David burst into a laugh. "Blest if I didn't forget all about Tommy," he cried, turning to search the platform with eager eyes. "He's here somewhere, but he's a shy youth and I guess he was afraid you'd want to kiss him, too, Judy. Oh, there he is. Hullo, Tommy! Step lively, please!"

A tall dark-haired youth in a gray suit and overcoat, who had been standing with his back to them a short distance away, turned and showed a pleasant, homely face

with two very lively eyes and a wide, firm mouth.

"This is the famous Hughes Junior," said David, introducing him to them collectively. "Collector of dead bugs, and trouble generally. He looks mild, but you want to watch him."

Hughes Junior chuckled, in a slightly embarrassed fashion.

"Don't give me away too hard," he said, in an agreeable voice. "I haven't taken any of your bugs yet. I won't tell on him, Miss Kendall," he added with an admiring glance at Elinor, "although I could make you shudder with tales of his dark deeds."

"Now, don't let's waste time," said David briskly. "Where are we bound first? How about taking a peep at the art-joint? Do you allow visitors in the morning?"

"Do you really want to go?" asked Patricia, beaming. "The modeling room's open, and you can always see the antique."

"Let's look them over then," returned David, promptly. "We aren't keen on antiques—got too many in our boarding-house, but we want to see what you've

been up to, Miss, so lead on. Tommy here does not care much for female pursuits, but he'll have to put up with it for once."

"Female!" cried Patricia. "I like that! There are as many men as there are girls, aren't there, Elinor? You're shockingly ignorant, young man."

They started off, leaving Tom Hughes and Elinor to follow, and Judith, as she cast a searching backward glance at David's chum, whispered to Patricia that he must be very nice and sociable for he seemed just as much at home with Elinor as if she'd been another boy.

"Think he'll do for that future helpmeet you're expecting to turn up any old day, Judy?" Patricia mischievously whispered back.

"*Patricia*, he'll hear you!" gasped the scandalized Judith.

"What are you two mumbling about?" demanded David, shouldering his way through the assembly at the station door. "No fair talking secrets today. I've got to be in everything that's going on. 'Fess up now, Judy, you were complaining that

Tommy's nose was too long for the hero of your next novel, weren't you?"

"I never said a word about his nose," cried Judith, relieved to evade the real topic. "I'd be more polite than to criticize his linny-ments like that."

Patricia joined in David's peal of laughter. "Shades of Hannah Ann defend us!" she cried, gayly. "Don't spring any more bombs like that on us, Infant. We've got to last till lunch time, anyway."

"Lunch time!" repeated David, warmly. "I'm aiming to survive till at least five minutes after! Think of all the good things we're going to massacre. Where does Elinor want to go, Miss Pat? She didn't nominate it in her note!"

"We all want to go to the same place we had such fun in last spring, when we thought we were so rich," said Judith quickly. "Elinor said you were to have first choice, though, as it was your treat."

"Litz-Tarlton, wasn't it?" asked David. "O. K. for me, and Tommy is a good-natured brute, who doesn't care where he feeds, so that he *feeds*."

They found the usual array of aproned students in the corridors and work rooms, and although the boys tried to be enthusiastic it was plain that the famous Academy did not appeal to them very strongly.

"Pretty smelly sort of a place, isn't it?" said Tom Hughes to Patricia, with great cheerfulness. "I suppose you get awfully mussed up with that clay, too. Isn't it hard to work in?"

Patricia, though a bit disappointed, felt delightfully superior as she replied loftily, "It isn't so bad. We don't mind, you know, because we're so interested in the work."

They all stood around on the sloppy floor of the clay room as she undid the moist wrappings of her half-finished head. As the cloths were laid aside, there was a disheartening silence.

"It looks sort of whopper-jawed, doesn't it, Miss Pat?" asked David, hesitating. "I can see it's going to be a stunner when it's done, but I guess I'm weak on sculpture anyway. I can't understand it in the green stage."

"It looks like a foreigner, all right," ventured Tom Hughes, and was rewarded for his courage by a flash of passionate gratitude from Patricia's big gray eyes.

"He's a Russian refugee," she said, triumphantly, and as she quickly covered her work again, and they passed out through the little side entrance, she told them the tragic scrap of the model's history that had sifted through the gossip of the work room.

"I see why Judy is so keen on the fine arts just now," teased David as he dropped into step again. "Lots of material for current fiction, eh, Ju?"

But Judith maintained a discreet silence, and David and Patricia fell into talk of school and study till the door of the great hotel swung wide to admit their little party.

"I say, this is fine!" declared David, as he looked about him in the palm-shaded, pink and gold dining-room. "Beats our refectory at the Prep, doesn't it, Tommy old boy?"

Hughes made a careful inventory of the

delicate china and sparkling silver before he delivered himself.

"I haven't had a sample of the food yet," he said, gravely, "but if it comes up to the equipment, I'll be perfectly satisfied."

Patricia and Elinor, who, with Judith, had put on their best for the little spree, were in the highest spirits and were delighted with everything, remembering many of the chief features of the room and pointing them out to each other until David protested.

"I say, you needn't rub it in that Tom and I are greenhorns," he said, grinning. "Don't forget that once you were quite as unaccustomed to all this magnificence as we are now."

"Listen to him!" exclaimed Patricia, gayly. "He's been abroad for *months* in all sorts of grandeur, and he pretends——"

She broke off suddenly at the swift remembrance of that futile search for health that had led the gentle Mrs. Carson to her grave in far-away Florence. She caught his hand under the table in a quick squeeze, while Elinor hurried into compari-

sons that claimed Judith's and Tom's close attention.

"I'm a horrid pig to forget," she whispered contritely. "Don't be cross, Frad dear; you know how sorry I am."

David gave an answering squeeze that brought the tears to her eyes, as he whispered in return, "That's all right, old lady. Don't you fret about me."

He dropped her hand at the obsequious voice of the waiter at his elbow.

"Do you wish to order, sir?"

After the man had gone, Patricia, who had flushed, suddenly giggled. "Did you see him looking at us, Frad?" she asked, in an undertone. "He thought he'd caught us holding hands, like regular grown-up spoons!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" growled David, hotly. "He'd know better than that."

Nevertheless, in spite of his protest, David took great care to behave with the utmost frigidity to Patricia whenever the smiling waiter made his appearance, and instead lavished his care on Judith, who took on airs of importance that were delightful to behold.

"We caught our first view of Bruce Haydon here—remember, Norn?" said Patricia, happily consuming her entrée. "Wouldn't it be fun if we'd run across someone else this time?"

"I don't think so," said David resolutely. "We haven't such a lot of time to be together that we need anyone else butting in. I'm satisfied as we are."

"You must have had a thought wave, Miss Patricia," said Tom Hughes. "The unexpected friend is here all right."

The girls swept a puzzled glance around the room, but could discern no familiar face among the gay groups at the many little tables. David, however, gave an exclamation, and half rose in his chair.

"Sure enough, Tommy. It's Hilton to the very life. Don't you see him, Pat, coming in with that head waiter? Do you mind if we ask him to join us, Elinor? He's coming right this way. He's English Lit., and a dandy fellow, if he is a teacher."

Elinor gave a hasty assent, but Patricia was ardent.

"Oh, do ask him, David," she urged,

taking in the attractive athletic figure with its wholesome self-reliant air. "He looks awfully nice."

"He's all of that. He's the youngest professor in the school and no end a good fellow," supplemented Tom Hughes, heartily.

David half rose again, and signaled to attract the other's attention, and when Mr. Hilton saw who was hailing him, a pleased smile ran over his face and he strode forward with outstretched hand.

"Well, this is luck!" he began, but paused, seeing the girls. "I'm in for a bit of lunch before the matinee, and I can only say 'howdy.' Going to take in the miracle play at the Globe,—finest thing in town, they say. See you later, perhaps," and he bowed to them all, vaguely including the three girls in his kindly glance.

"Not much you won't!" cried David. "You're going to have lunch with us—we've only just begun. I want you to meet my sisters. That is, if you haven't any other engagement," and here he snickered, for there was a rumor current in the

Prep that Hilton was secretly devoted to some unknown charmer.

The insinuation fell harmless, as far as the young professor was concerned.

"I shall be delighted, if you'll be so good as to let me," he said gratefully, with his sincere gaze on the festive group about the dainty table. "I've heard of your good luck in finding your family, and am very glad to meet them."

A chair was brought and another luncheon ordered, and soon they were chattering as gayly as though they had all known each other for ages. Elinor inquired for Mr. Lindley, who by chance had been Mr. Hilton's room-mate at college, and heard that he was in France on his belated honeymoon.

"He expected to be married last fall, but there was a hitch in getting out his book," said Mr. Hilton, as he finished his salad. "So he couldn't get away till last month."

"We had a great interest in that book," said Elinor smiling, "for he was compiling it when he boarded with us last summer. I'm glad to hear it is out at last. We'll

have to get a copy of it, for old times' sake."

Tom Hughes, who had been surreptitiously glancing at his watch beneath the table cover, spoke reluctantly.

"If you people don't want to miss the first act, we'll have to be toddling," he said. "It's about five minutes after two."

"Where are you going, Kendall?" asked Mr. Hilton as they pushed back their chairs, and stood waiting for the last button on Judith's glove to come to terms. "If you haven't settled on anything special, I'd like to have you all see the new play with me. It's said to be the finest thing in America, and I'm sure your sisters would enjoy it."

David acquiesced, as far as the play was concerned. "But you are not going to take us," he said firmly. "This is my spree and I can't let any other fellow butt in. We'll get seats together, and have a bully time, if you're willing to go with us. Come, Judy, we'll hustle on ahead and secure the seats, while these elderly folks stroll after us at their leisure."

Patricia found Tom Hughes a very agreeable companion on the walk to the theater, and they discussed tennis and swimming with an ardor that was most exhilarating, while Elinor and Mr. Hilton kept up as best they could among the holiday crowds to the brisk pace that they maintained in the lead.

The play was all that had been promised and they sat through its mystic scenes with rapt attention, comparing notes enthusiastically in the intervals when the curtain was down, and when it was over they came out into the daylight with that peculiar sensation of unreality in the daylight world that follows an enthralling matinee.

"Don't the people seem funny-looking?" said Judith, blinking at the gayly dressed crush at the theater entrance. "They all seem like actors in a play, with the twinkly electric lights and the streaky yellow sunset behind those big buildings."

They paused a moment on the corner for a look at the twilit streets with their white pulsing points of electric lamps flickering above the hurrying crowds, while

behind the sky line, with its towers and minarets and huge squares of office buildings, the clear topaz of the winter sunset surged upward in the dimming turquoise sky.

"There's a picture for you, Elinor," said David, pointing to the beautiful serrated mass of the great buildings looming misty-blue against the gold. "Can't you remember that, and put it on canvas when you get home?"

Elinor made no reply. Her eyes were fixed on the lovely fading panorama of life that was shifting before them. The twilight, the sunset, and the haunting magic of the miracle play still lingering with them, touched them all into sudden seriousness, and they stood silent and intent, forgetful of the whirl of pleasure and traffic that swept about them.

"See how the sunset catches on the big cross on the tower!" said Patricia softly. "It's the only thing up there in the sky that answers the sun's signaling."

"'Light answering to light,'" quoted Mr. Hilton, and Patricia flashed an eager glance of appreciation at his earnest face.

After the young men had waved their last farewells from the car windows and the train had puffed its way out of the great arching dome, Patricia spoke her mind with her usual frankness.

"Tom Hughes is an awfully nice boy," she said, slipping a hand into Judith's and Elinor's arm, as they paced the platform, waiting for Miss Jinny's train. "But for pure, sheer adorableness, give me Mr. Hilton, every time. Don't you think he's a perfect *duck*, Elinor?"

Elinor laughed easily. "He seems to be very pleasant and he certainly is popular with the boys," she admitted, "but I must say I like Tommy Hughes immensely."

"Which have you selected for your future partner, Judy?" teased Patricia, turning to her little sister. "I saw your speculative eye upon them, and I knew you were weighing them well. Which is it to be—Tommy or the Prof?"

"I'm getting too old to be treated like such a baby, Miss Pat," said Judith with great dignity. "I wish you wouldn't be

so silly! How could I marry an old person like Mr. Hilton, anyway?"

"Then it's Tom," cried Patricia delightedly. "I wonder if he'll mind being tagged. Shall you tell him his fate soon, Ju, or let him gradually waken to it?"

Judith merely pursed her lips and tossed her head. "Don't you think the train must be late?" she said to Elinor. "I do hope you can stay till Miss Jinny gets here."

"I have to leave in just five minutes," said Elinor, glancing at the big illuminated clock face. "I can't be late for criticism in the night life, you know."

They paced for a minute or two in silence, and then Patricia gave a little sigh.

"Haven't we had a gorgeous time?" she said, thoughtfully. "I didn't realize that we could enjoy ourselves so much for such a long time. It's been a whole month now, and getting nicer every day. We've been always so pinched that it seems almost wicked to be so careless about spending money, doesn't it, Norn?"

"I don't feel that way," said Elinor

gratefully. "I'm thankful every minute of the day for the happiness we have, and I feel that it has come to us from the same Lord that made the world full of beauty and joy."

Patricia gave her arm a quick squeeze. "If we weren't on a public platform, I'd kiss you for that, Elinor Kendall," she said, ardently. "You make things so comfortable for me."

"We don't waste anything, anyway, and we do all we can to be nice to other people," said Judith, seriously. "And that ought to count, oughtn't it?"

"Like a charm to keep off ghosts," laughed Patricia. "Perhaps we ought to cross our fingers, Ju, when we remember to. That might help, too."

But Judith was not attending. Her eyes were fixed on the far side of the great station.

"Why, there she is!" she cried in surprise. "She must have come in on the wrong track! She's looking all around for us. Do hurry, Elinor! I'll run on ahead and tell her you're coming."

CHAPTER VIII

SMOOTH WATERS

"WELL, I declare, if you ain't just the same," said Miss Jinny, as Patricia piloted her through the crowds to the cab-stand.

Elinor, taking Judith with her, had said a hasty farewell and hurried off to the Academy for her criticism in the night life, with promises to return as soon as possible.

Miss Jinny, in her fine, last-season's dress, with the usual up-to-date hat on her scanty drab hair, and the twinkle of amusement at the continuous entertainment that life afforded her, was looking so well that Patricia voiced her wonder that she should have come to town for doctoring, as her letter had intimated.

Miss Jinny chuckled huskily. "Don't you worry about that," she said, mysteriously. "It ain't my health. It's some-

thing I didn't want to write on paper," and she tapped her upper lip suggestively.

Patricia, noting the downy line that penciled the corners of her firm mouth, hesitated to put an inquiry that could be delicate enough to indicate the faint moustache without hurting Miss Jinny's feelings.

"Uppers!" said Miss Jinny, wholly unconscious of Patricia's perturbation. "Came in on the sly last week to have a new set made. Got measured for 'em, and am going to get them day after tomorrow. Thought I'd combine business with pleasure and make a visit while they were being filed to fit. I don't reckon that dentist'll hit them off first shot. They mostly never do, you know."

"I hope he doesn't," said Patricia, warmly. "For then you'll have to stay longer with us. And we're going to have *such* a good time!"

In the taxicab she unfolded the plans for the week that Miss Jinny had promised them, dwelling on each detail with all the ardor of her enthusiastic nature.

"Lands alive!" cried Miss Jinny, enjoying herself hugely in prospect. "I haven't the duds to do credit to such doings. Why, I'm all out of style, and you know it, Louise Patricia Kendall! You'll have me running into all sorts of extravagance, dyking out for your tea parties and such like fandangos."

The taxi stopped with a bump at the curb and Patricia sprang out, paid the man and joined Miss Jinny on the sidewalk before the door had opened to admit the little worn trunk that the driver shouldered with such ease.

"Why, it's a mansion for sure!" exclaimed Miss Jinny, gazing with approval at the fine front of the tall, well-kept, brown-stone house. "I was so afraid you girls might be poked away in some stuffy street with never a tree or bit of sky to hearten you, but that park's most equal to the real country."

"It was the park that brought us here," said Patricia, leading the way upstairs to the spacious front room where Miss Jinny was to be domiciled. "And we're so glad

we came. Mrs. Hudson is so kind to us that we don't feel like strangers at all. Even Ju adores her, and you know how hard she is to suit."

"Who's talking about me?" demanded Judith's high treble, and they turned to see her in the doorway, silhouetted against the brilliantly lighted hall.

"Mercy, Judy, where did you drop from?" asked Patricia, startled. "I didn't expect you for an hour. Is Elinor home, too?"

Judith explained that although she had been so eager for a visit to the celebrated night life, she had tired of the loneliness of work hours, and had run off home, leaving Elinor still expecting her criticism.

"Besides, I wanted to see Miss Jinny," said Judith, affectionately twining her arms about Miss Jinny's waist. "I haven't seen her for a whole month, you know."

Much to Patricia's surprise, Miss Jinny seemed not at all unused to the reticent Judith's caresses, but stooped and kissed her on her white forehead, rumpling her pale hair with kindly fingers.

"I reckon you're wanting to hear all about mama, and the visit you're going to make us," she said, wisely. "I'll get my old trunk here unstrapped, and we'll talk while I lay out my duds in those nice wide bureau drawers. You'll laugh, I guess, when you see what I've brought you each, but I want you to promise that if you don't like them, you'll say so, and I'll hunt up something that pleases you better."

"Oh, we'll be sure to *love* them, if they come from dear old Rockham and *you!*" cried Patricia, gathering an armful of hangers from the deep closet for Miss Jinny's use. "I'm perfectly crazy to see them, aren't you, Judy? I do hope Elinor doesn't stay too late tonight. You don't mind waiting for her, do you, Miss Jinny? It'll be so much more fun when we're all together."

"Bless your heart, no indeedy!" replied Miss Jinny emphatically. "I'd rather keep them a week than to have you slight Elinor. We'll have time to take the edge off our tongues, anyhow, before she gets

here, and get more settled down, I hope. I haven't felt so flighty in a blue moon, and it's all your fault, Patricia Louise Kendall, with your tales about theaters and parties and the like! We'll have to put a muzzle on her, won't we, Judith?—like poor old Nero after he nipped Georgie Smith when Georgie tried to make him walk the tight rope."

"Oh, do tell me about it," said Judith eagerly, settling down on a low stool beside the trunk. "Your stories are always so nice and nippy."

Miss Jinny laughed, as she shook out a creased skirt, and laid it carefully in the long lower drawer.

"I reckon most of the nippiness in this tale is Nero's work—not mine," she said, smoothing the long folds of gray lansdown into shape with absent fingers. "You see, it was this way. Old Miss Fell, who lives in that big red brick house——"

"Yes, I know," said Judith, expectantly, but Miss Jinny had whisked to her feet and whirled about towards the door.

"I saw you in the looking glass!" she

cried gleefully. "You needn't think you can surprise us, young lady!"

She had Elinor in her arms, to everyone's great amazement, and Elinor, far from being reluctant, was as responsive as though Miss Jinny were her own mother.

"Oh, you're just in time!" she cried, her cheeks flushed and her eyes shining with a great light of happiness. "You were Aunt Louise's best friend here, and you'll know just how she'd feel. I got my criticism!" She paused, choking with emotion. "He came up behind me, and he stood there so long I was afraid to go on working; and when I stopped, he spoke out loud, twisting his moustache and popping off his eye-glasses."

"What did he say?" burst out Patricia, unable to bear the suspense. "Don't beat around the bush so long, for pity's sake, Norn!"

"He spoke so loud I was ashamed," went on Elinor. "He sort of bawled it out. '*Remarkable* talent, madame, remarkable talent.' And everybody turned around

and looked at me till I felt like sinking through the floor."

"How perfectly heavenly!" exclaimed Patricia, with rapture. "I wish I'd been there to hear it."

"Your Aunt Louise will rejoice to see this day," said Miss Jinny solemnly. "For I'm sure she sees it, wherever she is, and I know just how her dark proud eyes would shine. She always got regularly lighted up when she was real pleased—like you look now, child."

"Hannah Ann will be awfully proud, too," said Judith, thoughtfully. "She's regularly wrapped up in Elinor, because she's so much like Aunt Louise, she says."

Elinor looked her surprise. "Why, I didn't know Hannah Ann liked me specially," she protested. "I thought Miss Pat was her favorite."

"She used to be," was Judith's frank reply. "But since you've become an artist, like Aunt Louise, she fairly *adores* you!"

The idea of Hannah Ann in any such state of loving frenzy was irresistible, and

they all pealed out their appreciation of Judith's picture of the grim elderly housekeeper of Greycroft.

"You may laugh, but it's true, all the same," said Judith decisively. "And I'll prove it to you all before long—see if I don't.

The soft chimes of the dinner gong began their melodious call before anyone could answer, and in the mad scramble to make themselves presentable in the shortest possible time, Hannah Ann's enthusiasms were forgotten.

That night, after Miss Jinny's trunk had finally been disposed of, and all the gossip of Rockham village and outskirts had been thoroughly aired, and Miss Jinny, tired from her strenuous day, had gone thankfully to bed, Patricia and Elinor were talking over the day's happenings as they brushed their hair in the seclusion of their own room.

"Isn't it wonderful how Miss Jinny seems to fit in?" said Patricia, brushing the shining ripples till they fairly radiated. "I was so afraid that she might feel strange

among such different sort of people, but she didn't care a bit. She's going to be awfully popular, if she keeps on. That nice old Mr. Spicer talked to her a lot at dessert, and he's awfully exclusive, you know."

"He isn't any older than she is," Elinor replied indignantly. "He's gray and pale from his illness. He was asking Miss Jinny about the air at Rockham, and she praised it so that he was much impressed. We may have him for a neighbor next summer."

"You don't mean?" began Patricia, incredulously.

"Of course, I don't mean as Miss Jinny's special property, you goose; I was only thinking of him as a pleasant addition to the old ladies' card parties and porch teas,—they need men so badly."

The idea lodged in Patricia's fertile brain was not so easily routed out.

"Still, *in case*," she insinuated with a giggle. "I don't think it would be such a bad sort of thing, do you, Norn?"

Elinor laid down her brush impressively.

"Patricia Kendall," she said, severely, "don't ever let me hear you even *whisper* such nonsense to yourself. Miss Jinny is too nice and sensible to be made fun of in that way, and I won't have it. Remember, once for all I won't have it!"

"All right," acquiesced Patricia, meekly. "I didn't mean to be silly. I'm a lot fonder of her than you are, and I was only thinking what fun it would be for her, don't you see?"

"I see that you are a feather-headed kitten," said Elinor, not at all mollified. "Miss Jinny will do very well as she is without your romantic nonsense to mortify her. I'm ashamed of you, indeed I am, Patricia. I thought you had more delicacy."

Patricia lifted her brows, perplexed and inquiring, and then dropped them with a shrug that seemed to indicate that the matter no longer interested her.

"What are *you* going to do with that lovely old shawl she brought you, Elinor?" she asked, tossing the end of her long braid over her shoulder and yawning luxuriantly. "I'd like to make a party dress of that

heavenly silk cloak I got, but it seems like cutting up one's own grandmother."

Elinor gave a start. "Well, I declare, if I didn't forget all about it!" she exclaimed. "We were so excited with the presents and all, that I never told you! It's going to be perfectly gorgeous. I know you'll be crazy over it."

Patricia flung herself on her sister, overwhelming her in a flurry of pink kimono and white arms. "Tell me!" she cried. "Tell me this minute, you aggravating thing! You're getting to be a regular miser of your news—you won't give up till it's dragged out of you. Speak, or I'll have your life!"

Elinor held her close, laughing with enjoyment at her ardor.

"It isn't anything to kill for, Miss Pat," she rippled. "It's merely the Academy ball that takes place next week——"

Patricia flung off the encircling arms, and was on her feet in an instant.

"And we are going?" she demanded breathlessly. "Oh, say that we are going, Elinor!"

"Of course we're going," said Elinor, evenly. "What else should we do? And I want you to persuade Miss Jinny to stay over for it, Miss Pat."

"That will I!" cried Patricia, heartily. "We'll ship Judy to Mrs. Shelly on an afternoon train, and make Miss Jinny feel it's her duty to chaperone us among the wild and woolly artists. Oh, it will be contemptibly easy! But," and her face fell in dismay, "what are we to wear? We haven't any party clothes, you know."

Elinor rose, and going to her bag that was still dangling from the chair back where she had flung it in her hurried preparation for dinner, took out a cardcase, and drawing forth three square bits of gray cardboard, handed them to Patricia.

" 'An Arabian Nights Entertainment,' " read Patricia, mumbling in her haste. " 'No guests admitted unless in costume' . . . m-m-m-m . . . 'The Sultan Haroun-al-Raschid' . . . Oh, I see! We can rig up in anything we choose,—so that it looks sort of Turkish. *Dee*-licious! I know what to do with my rose-colored cloak right now!"

"My shawl will be stunning," rejoiced Elinor. "They've both come to us in the very nick of time. With that old silk skirt of mine, and that worn-out gold-beaded tunic of Aunt Louise's that we found in the closet at Greycroft, we'll be simply dazzling. See if we're not, Patricia Louise Kendall."

"I wonder what Miss Jinny will say to a costume?" Patricia said, her bright face clouding with the thought.

"I believe she'll like it," declared Elinor, confidently. "She does so love variety—and she has entered into everything already with such a vim."

"Perhaps she's been hungering for what she calls fripperies," said Patricia, hopefully. "She's so tremendously *alive* that she must need some play, and if she's only willing, we'll see that she gets it, won't we, Norn?"

"Find out in the morning how she feels about it," said Elinor, switching off the light. "I'm pretty sure she'll want to go."

At the earliest permissible hour, Patricia

slipped into her pink kimono and slippers and sped softly to Miss Jinny's room, where she tapped lightly, and was admitted at once by Miss Jinny, fully dressed and with a little book in her hand.

Patricia opened her plan with great expedition, pouring out explanation and entreaty in one excited rush, while Miss Jinny sat opposite her on the side of the bed, her rather protruding pale blue eyes cocked sidewise at her in the meditative way she had when deeply interested.

"So you see, we really *need* you. And you wouldn't have to wear anything very outlandish, you know," urged Patricia, ending up with her strongest argument. "And I'm sure Judy would love to be with Mrs. Shelly alone—they'd have so much more chance for talk together."

Miss Jinny said not a word for what seemed to Patricia a very long minute; then she gave her deep chuckle and said decisively, "I'll go as Sinbad the Sailor. I've a picture of him at home, and I know just how he's dressed. He's so everlastingly muffled up about his shanks that I used to

think he was a lady when I was knee high to a grasshopper."

Patricia gave a gasp. "But he wore a turban and great whiskers!" she said, impulsively. "How in the world could you stand that?"

Miss Jinny cocked her head knowingly. "Trust me," she replied, laconically. "I had a cousin who was an actor and I saw him put on a beautiful beard with spirit-gum and creped hair once. That was twenty years ago, but I reckon they can still be had here in town."

Patricia hesitated. "But perhaps you'd rather have an easier costume,—Aladdin's mother, or——"

Miss Jinny shook her head. "I always was bent on sea-life and I know a lot about it. I can swap tales that'll make them believe I'm the only genuine Sinbad, and I wouldn't miss the chance for a mint," she said conclusively.

Patricia was forced to give in gracefully. "I know you'll be splendid," she declared with rather forced heartiness. "I wish we were as well fixed for our parts."

Miss Jinny, with a glance at the little book in her hand, gave a guilty start and jumped up from the bed's edge with a horrified face.

"Do you know that it's Sunday morning, and I ought to be reading my two chapters?" she demanded severely. "This town life is making me forget my religion already, and as for you, you worldly-minded young sinner, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, beguiling me with your heathenish dance parties. Go along now and let me get my mind in order again."

"Oh, let me stay," urged Patricia. "You can read out loud, and I'll slip in bed here to keep warm. What part are you reading now?"

"You'll hear," returned Miss Jinny, settling herself with a jerk.

Patricia curled up cozily while Miss Jinny read the two Sunday chapters in a full, melodious voice, beginning with the ineffable words, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

She laid down the little worn book just

as the soft notes of the gong floated up from the lower hall.

"Mercy on us!" she ejaculated, rising hurriedly. "I've gone and made you late for breakfast!"

Patricia wriggled out from her warm nest reluctantly. "There's lots of time," she assured Miss Jinny. "That's the first call. We've got half an hour yet."

"I'll come over to your room in just twenty-five minutes to the dot," called Miss Jinny after her, as she gathered her draperies about her and fled down the hall.

The day passed delightfully, with morning service at the famous Dr. Arnold's stately church, a specially sociable dinner at home, and a 'bus ride through the crisp sunshine of the afternoon into the snowy outskirts, with a cozy little tea in Miss Jinny's big front room, where they could watch the twilight gather among the bare trees of the park and the lamps sparkle out among the shadows. After supper Mr. Spicer invited them in to see his collection of photographs which he had taken in all parts of the civilized and barbarous world,

before the long illness, contracted in the swamps of West Africa, had put a stop to his active, adventurous life as a collector for the University.

The girls enjoyed this surprising revelation of the quiet, elderly gentleman's vigorous taste, but Miss Jinny fairly reveled in such close contact with the life she so ardently envied, and it was nearly midnight when they said good-night and hurried to their rooms, Miss Jinny declaring that she'd never spent such a satisfactory day in her life, and all three full of the ideas for their costumes which Mr. Spicer's photographs had suggested to them.

The week that followed flew on winged feet. The costumes, simple enough at first, grew in detail with every day and absorbed so much of their spare time that Patricia frankly gave up any thought of work and yielded herself to the enjoyment of Miss Jinny and the day's pleasure without any effort at serious work.

"The best thing about you, Miss Pat," said Elinor, the day before the party, "is that you know when to stop. I simply

haven't accomplished a thing the last two days, and yet I couldn't have the courage to shirk the Academy. You stay away joyously, and get the full benefit."

"Why not?" returned Patricia, her fingers busy with Sinbad's girdle. "You can't do two things at once, to do them *well.* I'm commonplace enough to realize that, but you geniuses go on trying to tear yourselves into little pieces, and then howl because you aren't making masterpieces in every department."

"I know it," said Elinor, sinking wearily into a chair. "I've tried to keep up with you all at home here, and do my work, too, but it hasn't worked. I believe I'll stay home today and take a real holiday."

Patricia nodded. "You'll be in better shape to begin on the library design next week," she said briskly. "I'm not going to start my study till I feel just like it. Doesn't pay to push yourself too hard. We've had a glorious week, with the concerts and theater and the museums and all, and I've learned more than I should have at the school. Just *living* teaches you lots, if

you'll learn, and I don't believe in turning up my nose at things just because they aren't in a roster."

Miss Jinny, who had been out scouring the town for the materials for Sinbad's beard, broke in on them breathlessly.

"What do you think?" she cried, her eyes popping with pleasurable excitement. "The Haldens are in town for over Sunday, and the girls are going to the party tomorrow night! They've just landed yesterday and were in the customer's hunting up suits when I ran across them."

"How splendid!" said Patricia, glowing. "To think that we'll meet them here in town after all. Are they going to Rockham this summer?"

"Going right up on Monday," said Miss Jinny, taking off her things. "The two older girls go back to college, but the rest of the family go right home and stay there."

"I wonder what they are like, and if they'll like us," mused Elinor, her gaze on the fire that was snapping on the hearth in Miss Jinny's room where the sewing was being done.

"We'll find out tomorrow night," said Patricia, readily. "And now that the costumes are all done, tomorrow night can't come too soon for me."

"I'm about ready, too," chimed in Miss Jinny. . "I reckon they'll be quite astonished when they meet with their old friend Sinbad the Sailor."

CHAPTER IX

THE ACADEMY BALL

"WHAT a crowd!" exclaimed Elinor, as they pushed their way to the cloak room. "I hope the floor won't be too full for dancing!"

"Don't give way to despair so soon—lots of these are maids and chaperones. Naskowski told me when we squeezed past him at the door that the rooms upstairs weren't half filled yet," said Patricia, hopefully. "Here, Miss Jinny, squeeze in before me—there's a chance to get inside if we form a flying wedge."

"Mercy sakes, we'll be torn to tatters!" cried Miss Jinny from behind her veil. "Good thing we're done up good and tight. Lands! There goes my whisk—no, they don't either, it's only the veil. Oh, for pity's sake, woman, let me through without any palaver! Can't you tell I'm a female?"

The attendant, who at the sight of Miss

Jinny's bushy beard had thrust a sturdy arm across the door, dropped the barrier with a snort of laughter, and they were inside the swinging door of the cloak room, with a flushed maid waiting for their wraps, and an edge line of muffled newcomers pushing at their backs.

"It's a blessing we finished ourselves up to the last notch at home," said Patricia, with wide eyes of dismay for the throngs at the two mirrors. "We haven't a chance to get a peep here, unless we stay all night. Is my headpiece on all right, Elinor? I feel all askew after that crush."

"You're as sweet as can be," answered Elinor, with a fond pride in voice and eyes. "You make the dearest Fairy Banou, with these filmy scarfs and draperies! Doesn't she, Miss Jinny?"

Miss Jinny, who was still enshrouded save for the torn veil, gave the last pat to Patricia's gauzes, and handed the pink silk cloak to the admiring maid, before she spoke. Then she looked Patricia over thoroughly and gave her husky chuckle.

"I declare if I ain't a firm believer in

fairies after this," she said with frank affection. "There isn't anything prettier nor sweeter in the whole ball, I'll warrant!"

Patricia laughed and blushed with pleasure, preening herself a little and stretching on tiptoe to try to catch a glimpse in the crowded mirror; there was a movement as a sultana who had been carmining her full lips gave place to a dark beggar maid, and Patricia caught the vision of a slender, airy figure, glittering beneath its gauzy draperies with the sparkle of bright gold, and with the glint and shimmer of rosy clanking bracelets and anklets, and the spangled glory of the rose-crowned headpiece stirring a magical memory of Persia.

"Why, I am awfully nice!" she cried, delighted with the picture. "I'll never know myself! Do get off your things, Norn, I'm crazy to see how you look."

Elinor, helped by Miss Jinny, shed her wrappings and stood revealed as a lovely Princess of China, with billowing draperies and flashing glass jewels and a tiny filet sparking on her dark hair. Some of the swarm about the mirrors turned at Patri-

cia's exclamation, and with generous admiration pressed back upon themselves so that for a moment the dark, serious beauty of the Princess of China flashed out at Elinor from the long oblong of the glass, filling her lovely eyes with a gratified light and flushing her tinted cheeks a deeper pink.

"How sweet of you to let me see!" she cried impulsively to the houris and queens and beggar-maids that had given her the brief tribute. "I don't believe I know any of you, but I'm just as much obliged as——"

She broke off in amazement at the familiar grin of one of the most glittering queens. "Griffin, of all people!" she cried, delightedly, and held out an eager hand.

The sultana, speaking with decidedly un-oriental diction, came shimmering over to them, and shook hands with occidental heartiness.

"This is what I call luck," she said, genially. "I'm going to steer you two peaches right into the thick of the tumult, and if you don't have the time of your sad young lives, my name's not—well, here,

you'd better pronounce it for me," and she handed out a card on which was printed in clear black letters,

THE SULTANA KEHERRYSEENOGASSOLEHENNELECTRIZADE
(OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LIGHT OF THE HARUMSCARUM)

Patricia and Elinor puckered their brows over it, but Miss Jinny, craning her head over their shoulders, gave a snort.

"Pooh, that's as easy as rolling off a log," she said, with a toss of her turban. "If you'd added acetylene and alcohol you'd made it a bit longer."

Griffin grinned amiably at the whiskered countenance. "Good for you, old top," she responded, cheerfully. "You ought to go into the Sunday puzzle department. You'd be hung all over with gold-filled watches. Where did you blow in from?"

Miss Jinny had been quietly removing her outer coverings and as Griffin spoke she dropped her last concealing wrap, and stepped out in turban and embroidered jacket, vermillion girdle and wide, baggy blue trousers whose voluminous folds almost

hid the vermillion and gold tips of her curling slippers. A simitar was thrust fiercely through the flaming girdle, and a gaudy hookah cuddled in the crook of her arm, while the bristling whiskers and encarmined cheeks and nose of the weather-beaten seafarer proclaimed a strong masculine personality in striking contrast to the pretty young men Turks and Persians that tittered in feminine fashion all about her.

"Upon my soul!" cried the sultana of the inflammable name. "You're a corker! Do you mean to say, Miss Pat, that this buccaneer is the lady from the rural districts you were spouting about?"

Miss Jinny gave her husky chuckle.

"I'm the only original Sinbad," she declared with a very un-Persian hitch to her flowing trousers. "I've got tales that'll make you creep, and as for hair-breadth escapes—why, I'm so full of 'em that I can't see a tumbler of water but that I make a noise like a shipwreck."

"Come along upstairs with me!" cried the sultana, excitedly, hooking her arm in that of the embroidered jacket. "You're

too good to waste! I need you in my business."

Patricia and Elinor followed, rejoicing in Miss Jinny's instant success, for, as Elinor whispered to Patricia, if Griffin took Miss Jinny about, she would be one of the features of the evening.

They went slowly up the palm-banked, stately stairway, through a dim antechamber where a line of twinkling barbaric lamps led to the great curtained arch of the entrance to the main assembly room.

"Isn't it lovely and mysterious?" murmured Elinor, pausing to enjoy the sense of isolation that the obscurity of the blurred lamps emphasized. "I almost hate to lift the curtain. It may be so disappointing."

Patricia set her spangled roses twinkling with a nod of comprehension, but she did not pause.

"This is nice enough," she said incisively. "It takes away the taste of the jumbled dressing room, but it makes me all the readier for the real thing—the people and the lights and the dancing. I simply can't

waste another instant," and she parted the heavy fold and they slipped into the radiant Arabian land of fairy.

Lights were flashing everywhere, and everywhere silks and jewels shimmered in oriental profusion, striking the eye with a bewildering medley of color.

Patricia drew in her breath with a sharp little sigh of satisfied anticipation, but had no more than a murmur for Elinor's rapturous exclamations, so busy was she with the brilliant scene before her.

Among the palms and costly rugs that backgrounded a marvelous regal dais occupying one long end of the great room, sat the glittering figure of the portly Haroun-al-Raschid, Sultan of Bagdad and husband of many lovely wives, whose multi-colored costumes made a glowing garden on the rugs at the foot of the dais, while on the embroidered cushions at the side of the monarch a lovely Scheherazade in shimmering white satin with strings of glistening gems in her hair, on her breast, on her arms and ankles, made an alluring picture of the new-made bride. Tall palms reared

their stately fronds above the group and slave girls, with fierce Nubians in attendance, waited in mute homage at either side of the throne. Lamps of brass glittered in the alcoves back of the great dais, and above it all the roofs and minarets of the ancient city gloomed in the moonlight of the thousand and second night.

All about the spacious hall were groups of Arabians, of fair Circassians, of dusky Nubians and turbaned Turks, while the rustle of costly fabrics and the odor of heavy Eastern perfumes floated in the air; the modern city outside in the wintry electric lights was well forgot in the enchantment of the moment, and Patricia lost count of time and sense of self in the pageant that swept across the lofty chamber to make its obeisance at the imperial divan.

"Look, Norn, look," she whispered, as Aladdin and his mother, in rustling native embroidered silks, led another Princess of China in bridal procession across the center of the scene, their rich dresses making a bright spot in the shifting medley of color.

"She's not half so lovely as you, for all her things are so fine. I wonder who—why, it's *Doris Leighton!* She never told us what she was going to be; and she knew you were to be the Princess. Isn't it queer?"

"We didn't many of us tell, you know," returned Elinor absently, with her eyes on Morgiana meekly following her master with the basket of fruit which was to be such a feature in her triumphant dance after the robbers had been boiled alive in their own panniers. "There's Margaret Howes. Isn't she lovely in that pomegranate and gold? What queer slippers she has—just like the ballet dancers. And there's Ali Baba with the forty thieves, all the portrait class men in a bunch."

"And the young king of the Black Isles and his wife!" cried Patricia, giggling. "That's Jeffries, the modeling-room pet, and Miss Green. She'll exercise the black art in earnest. Did you ever see such paralyzing expressions as she can call up! That pastry cook is Peacock, the assistant in the antique. I know him by his red hair."

As the procession wound to its finish the Sultan arose and with many courteous speeches in the eastern phraseology welcomed the company to the night's entertainment, explaining that the first half would be employed in various acts by those who had appeared in the procession, with an intermission when refreshments would be served by slaves, after which there would be a general dance followed by supper in the antechamber.

A space was cleared in the center of the room, and there was a general rush to secure good positions. Patricia found herself separated from Elinor by a broad-shouldered Moslem whose slow speech revealed him as the good-natured Naskowski.

"I did work in the clay room till the hour for this ball," he said, replying to her surprise. "And after I speak to you on the hall I become a good Mohammedan very rapid—so rapid I see you and your most beautiful sister come in by the great door. Many others see *also*. We say she make a more fine Princess than the one——"

"Oh, hush!" cautioned Patricia, grasping his arm in her agitation. "She'll hear you! She's just back of us this minute."

Doris Leighton, with a rather flushed face, leaned forward as Patrica spoke and touched her on the shoulder.

"I must congratulate you, Peri Banou," she said with sharp gayety. "Everyone is saying that the Princess—your sister—is the *clou* of the ball."

Patricia had an uneasy sense of insincerity in the light tone, but a swift glance into the wide eyes of the smiling Doris reassured her.

"She *is* lovely, isn't she?" she replied ardently. "But her dress isn't half so gorgeous as yours," she added heartily.

Doris Leighton's lashes drooped till her eyes were a narrow line of inscrutable blue.

"Thank you so much," she said in a tone of such even sweetness that Patricia felt uncomfortable, though she did not know why.

Doris sank back to her place and Patricia turned her attention to the laughable

parodies and excellent dances and necromancy that filled the first half of the program. It was all hugely diverting, and she laughed and applauded with the rest, but all the while at the back of her mind there was a little uneasiness, a sense of insecurity and disillusionment that flavored all the gayety with its fleeting bitterness. She was uneasy till she had found Elinor and in the telling of the insignificant incident had regained enough confidence to laugh at her foolish disquiet.

"I'm always making mountains out of mole-hills, and having you level them for me, Norn," she said, taking a glass of sherbet from the flower-wreathed tray of the charming slave. "I wish I wasn't such an alarmist. I felt as frantic as though Doris Leighton had drawn a dagger, and now I can see what a goose I am."

"That's because you expect people to be perfect and then, when they show the tiniest human weakness, you declare them demons at once," said Elinor, gayly. "You couldn't expect her to *like* overhearing them praise me, could you? I think she

tried to be very kind, and I admire her tremendously for it."

Patricia puckered her brows judicially.

"I do, too, *now*," she declared. "But I've been paid up for my evilmindedness by losing half my good time. I think I'll try to find her and be awfully agreeable to her. I'll feel better for it, I'm sure."

The dancing was beginning as Patricia made her way slowly across the great room to the laughing group where she had seen Doris Leighton but a moment ago, and before she was halfway across Doris and a tall Turk swung past her in the whirl of the newest dance, followed by Elinor and Aladdin, and then by Griffin and the young king of the Black Isles. Patricia stood still in sudden swift contrition.

"If I haven't forgotten all about Miss Jinny!" she thought remorsefully. "How fearfully self-absorbed I'm getting to be. I'm a perfect *pig!*"

She had a long search before she discovered the valiant Sinbad in a far corner of the now deserted divan surrounded by a circle of kindred spirits to whom Griffin

had delivered her, holding her own with great spirit and enjoyment among the dashing wit and pungent repartee.

Miss Jinny, at the sight of Patricia fluttering in among them in her white gauzy draperies like some dainty moth, held out a reproving finger.

"Why aren't you dancing?" she demanded sternly, her whiskers trembling with the fervor of her interest. "What is Elinor up to that you're not dancing?"

Patricia, abashed by being thus publicly admonished, murmured something about its being only the first dance, and not knowing many people, but Miss Jinny cut her short.

"Don't tell me," she said abruptly. "You ought to be dancing instead of wasting your time on old ladies like me." Here there was a burst of mirth at the incongruity of the words with Miss Jinny's ferocious masculine aspect, but she silenced it with a wave of her hookah stem. "Let me introduce the Second Calendar, who I hope knows enough respectable young men here to see that you aren't a wall flower."

A good-natured, whole-some looking young man in the clothes of a calendar, with a patch on his right eye, laid aside his long-necked lute and rose with a bow.

"I'm usually known as Herbert Lester, Miss Kendall," he said, smiling as he led her to the dancing floor. "Sinbad can tell you that my mother was an old friend of your aunt. I've just learned that you and your sister are students here. Have you seen the Haldens? They were asking me about you a moment before the intermission, and I was commissioned to hunt you up when I ran into the circle there in the divan and was hypnotized by Sinbad's wonderful sea tales."

He rattled on all through the dance, Patricia getting in only a few words here and there, and when the music stopped he steered her to a particulary gay group under a big palm in a corner, and introduced her to the two Halden girls and their mother, and then went off in search of Elinor and Miss Jinny.

Patricia found the Haldens, mother and daughters, so much to her mind that she

was full of regret that she had not met them earlier. They were kindly, wholehearted people who lived without any quarrel with life, and Patricia, as well as Elinor and Miss Jinny, rejoiced openly in the prospect of a summer together in dear old Rockham.

They parted, at the end of the sumptuous supper in the transformed antechamber, with a thousand plans for the coming season and a strong sense of enrichment in the friendship of these sincere and attractive neighbors.

"What do you think of the artists *now?*" asked Patricia, leaning back in the carriage as they were being whirled homeward. "Are they such serious people as you thought them, Norn?"

"They're so mighty much in earnest that they'll break their necks to do a thing right," retorted Miss Jinny with spirit. "It's their being so serious that makes them play so well."

Elinor smiled assent, and Miss Jinny went on.

"When folks are sure a thing's worth

while, they make it *go*. Think of how that same party would have slumped if everybody hadn't felt it was the most serious thing in the world to make it real." Then, with a sudden pounce, she changed the subject. "I've seen your wonderful Doris Leighton, Miss Pat, and I must say I don't take very much stock in her."

Patricia felt that same indefinite sense of loss and disillusionment which had haunted her earlier in the evening, and she shrank back into her corner without a word, fearing that Miss Jinny's clear vision might after all substantiate her shadowy misgivings.

It was Elinor who rushed to the defense.

"We've always found her sweet-tempered and kind, haven't we, Patricia? She's very popular and perhaps you thought her spoiled, but I'm sure, dear Miss Jinny, if you knew her better you'd like her as much as we do."

Miss Jinny gave a snort that almost shook her whiskers off.

"I'll be bound for you, Elinor Kendall, to find the sweetness in every sour apple.

Not that your Doris Leighton is sour on the outside. She's much too sweet for my taste. I don't trust them when they're so unearthly sweet."

Patricia recalled Griffin's remarks on the same subject, but she loyally suppressed the memory and called up instead the radiant vision of Doris as she had first seen her in her green apron, smiling back at her eager whisper of admiration, and her heart warmed to the memory.

"First impressions are always best, I find," she said sagely. "I won't believe I've been mistaken till I have to. What did she do that made you dislike her?"

Miss Jinny, cornered, had to admit that there was nothing she could put her finger on. "But I don't trust her eyes," she ended obstinately. "You have been deceived before, Miss Pat, and you may be again. However, I won't say another word against her. If you like her, that's enough. Now, let's talk about the nice people. How did you like that Lester boy? His mother was your Aunt Louise's chum at school."

"He was awfully nice," said Patricia enthusiastically. "Architects are so much better scrubbed than art students. He has lovely hair, too. He's tremendously fond of Miriam Halden, did you notice?"

Miss Jinny gave her husky chuckle. "Trust your eyes for spying out secrets," she said. "That boy has been devoted to Miriam all his life. She refused him when she was ten, and has kept on ever since. It's got to be a habit, he says. He's as jolly as a grig, but he doesn't give up, and I suppose some day Miriam will give in."

Patricia thrilled with interest.

"Oh, I hope it happens next summer, when we're home!" she cried. "I've always been perfectly crazy to know an engaged couple and I never have—except Mr. Bingham and Miss Auborn, and they weren't so very interesting anyway."

"They won't be of much use to you if they do get engaged," returned Miss Jinny sententiously. "'Two's company' after the ring appears."

"David says they're *slushy*," pursued Patricia, meditating. "But he's only a boy."

She was silent for a while, and then she sat up alive with enthusiasm.

"I've got it!" she exclaimed. "I'll make a study of a man and girl for the prize design, and I'll call it 'Two's company.' I'll have them looking at the ring on her hand, with a lovely rapt expression. Oh, how I wish it weren't Sunday tomorrow. I'm crazy to begin it."

"You'd better be thanking your stars for a day of rest, you incorrigible kitten," said Miss Jinny as the carriage stopped at the curb. "You'll need an extra nap after all these fandangos."

Patricia, however, was unconvinced.

"I'll show you when Monday comes!" she exulted, stepping lightly out into the frosty night. "You'll see if it isn't worth while."

CHAPTER X

THE PRIZE DESIGNS

"IT doesn't seem to come right," said Patricia, rumpling her hair with the back of one soiled hand and staring ruefully at the lumpy, meaningless group of two stiff figures in modeling-wax that stood stolidly on a thick little board on top of the piano stool.

"They do look a bit queer," admitted Elinor, reluctantly. "Perhaps when you've worked on them more——"

Patricia interrupted her hotly. "I won't waste another hour on them!" she declared vehemently. "I've slaved and slaved all my spare time, I missed the last of Miss Jinny's visit, and I didn't have time to hear a word of Judy's tales about Greycroft and the village, and I haven't taken a moment to myself this whole week! I've done with it now for good and all. I was an idiot to think I could do anything, anyway."

"I believe if you tried something that was more simple, you'd do better," said Elinor sympathetically. "You've taken such a tremendously elusive sort of thing in this. Why not try something that either Judith or I could pose for? That would help a lot, you know."

Patricia gave the stool a whirl, staring discontentedly at the afflicting group.

"It's a sorry mess," she commented dejectedly. "I don't believe I want to make a goose of myself again. No, I won't try, Norn. You're awfully good to offer to pose, but I'm done with prize designs till I've had more experience," and with a swoop she crumpled the two little stolid figures into an indistinguishable mass, pounding them flat with her pink palm.

"There! That's the last of *you!*" she said vindictively. "Let's see what you've been working on, Elinor. Ju said it was 'very satisfactory.'"

Elinor smiled. "I only started this afternoon while you were in class," she replied, bringing out a fair-sized canvas with a rough charcoal drawing on it. "I'm

just blocking in the outlines, as you see; but I've made a little color study that shows you how it will go."

Patricia took the bit of canvas board, and held it at arm's length, squinting at it with eyes that gradually brightened.

"Why, it's dandy, Elinor Kendall!" she cried. "It'll be perfectly lovely if you can put it through even as well as you've managed it here. Judy was drawing it mild!"

Judith, who was studying under the lamp at the center table with her fingers screwed into her ears and her mouth twisted intently in pursuit of knowledge, came abruptly back to life.

"Well, I didn't want you to expect too much," she said, with a gentle impatience. "If I'd praised it too much, you'd have been disappointed with the thing itself."

"Right-o, Miss Judith," laughed Patricia, flinging an arm about the young sage. "My word, but you're a crafty young one! I'd have raved about it till even Michael Angelo or Raphael couldn't have satisfied the expectations of the beholder. How do

you come by so much wisdom, Miss Minerva?"

Judith tossed her mane. "Don't call names," she responded, hiding the gratified smile that lurked in the corners of her mouth. "You'd think of things, too, if you didn't talk *quite* so much, Miss Pat. It's dreadfully hard to talk and think at the same time."

"Is it?" cried Patricia, delighted as usual with Judith's maxims. "Hear that now, will you, Norn? Ju's going to reform me. I hope I'll be a satisfactory subject, Judy darling. 'Thinking Taught While You Wait.' It's a great idea and it may lead to a new school of mental science. Ju would look fine in cap and gown as president of the college——"

Patricia broke off laughing at Judith's absolutely unconscious face, as, with fingers once again screwed into her ears and mouth twisted intently, she immersed herself in the dignified oblivion of study.

Patricia looked at her with laughing eyes that gradually grew sober.

"I've got it!" she said, eagerly turning

to Elinor. "I've got the idea for the sort of thing you meant. I'll do Judy just as she is—you'll pose, won't you, Ju? I won't be too hard on you."

"Don't I always study like this?" replied Judith without looking up. "Go ahead as long as you like—only don't talk. I want to study."

"Good girl, Judith!" cried Patricia, pulling the stool with its burden nearer to the light. "I'll plunge in right away and get it blocked in tonight. Do you know where I put that other package of modeling-wax, Elinor?"

She set to work with a will, humming to herself as she worked, the failure of her more ambitious undertaking forgotten in the joy of renewed hope, and her intimate knowledge of Judith's face and figure helping unconsciously to better work than she could have done in the schools.

When nine o'clock rang from the church tower across the park she laid down her tools with an air of great content.

"I believe it's going to go," she announced to the absorbed pair of workers

before her. "Wake up, Norn, and give me a criticism. Ju has to go to bed and can't hold the pose much longer anyway."

"Pooh, I'm not a bit tired," protested Judith. "I sit this way every night for *hours*."

Elinor laid down her brushes and turned in her chair. Her face lighted as she saw the rough, vigorous outlines of Patricia's latest effort.

"That's the real thing, Miss Pat!" she said enthusiastically. "If you can keep it up like that, you won't have to be ashamed of it, I can tell you!"

She came and stood behind Patricia, her hands on her shoulders, eager and interested.

"That shoulder is a little too high, and the head needs more fullness at the top—Ju has lots of hair—but it's going along splendidly, *splendidly!* Don't touch it again till Judith poses tomorrow. You want to keep close to life and not make up anything."

Patricia, meek in experience of past

failure, covered her work and put it safely away.

"I'll go on with it when I'm rested and Judy is fresh," she said contentedly. "If it goes on as rapidly as it has tonight, it will be ready to turn in at the end of the week. We have until Saturday night to put in our stuff, you know. You have to get yours in by noon, don't you?"

Elinor nodded. "But I shan't have any trouble finishing in time, I'm sure," she said with bright confidence. "I feel as though it were almost going to do itself."

The spare hours of the rest of that week were devoted to the prize designs, and both progressed so happily that their authors were filled with a greater measure of content as the days sped.

"I'm going to take mine in to the Academy to work on this afternoon while I wait for the night life," said Elinor on Thursday as they were leaving the breakfast room. "I want to see how it looks among the big casts and life studies. I'm afraid it won't show up very well among the *real* things, but it may help me to see its

faults and remedy them while I still have time."

Patricia gazed approvingly at the dim, shadowy study of graceful figures grouped in attentive attitudes about a reader in a landscape of suggested loveliness that spoke to any observer with delicate symbolism.

"It's the best ever," she declared. "I'll 'wagger,' as Hannah Ann says, that you lift the medal."

Elinor gave a gently contemptuous sniff as she stowed it away in its corner. "No doubt—with all those experienced students competing! Some of them have been there ten years, Miss Pat. I simply haven't the ghost of a show, and you know it."

Patricia was silenced, though unconvinced. "Don't you let any of those hyenas see it, all the same," she cautioned. "I know them better than you do. They'd rush another version in before yours, and then where would you be?"

"I don't believe anyone would be so low minded!" cried Elinor, shocked and

reproachful. "How can you say such things, Miss Pat?"

"Take my advice, my dear," grinned Patricia. "You're too good to see through some of those fakes, and this is one instance when my eyes are clearer than yours. It isn't often I can give you points, so do be grateful. Don't let those long-haired boys get a glimpse of it, or it's all up with you."

Elinor promised, smiling at Patricia's vehemence, and went off with her canvas, securely wrapped against curious eyes, held firmly in one gray-gloved hand.

Patricia looked after her with loving pride. "How pretty she is, and how clever," she thought tenderly. "And the best part of it is that she doesn't know what an adorable dear she is. I hope she gets an honorable mention, even if she can't hit the prize. She deserves a lot of good times, after all those lean years when she took such good care of us."

When Patricia came home from the library at half-past five, she was surprised to find Elinor stretched on the

couch, with a thick comfortable drawn up to her chin, and her face gray and haggard.

"What in the world—" she began in alarm, but Elinor silenced her questioning with a weak wave of one tired hand.

"I'm not really sick," she said, in a faint tone, as Patricia cuddled down on the floor beside her and took the chilly hand in her warm one. "I have one of my old headaches. I forgot to get any lunch. I had just put the key in my locker, when everything grew black and I'd have collapsed if Doris Leighton hadn't helped me to a chair. She gave me some milk and got my things for me, and when I felt well enough, she came over here with me. She's certainly the sweetest thing. She had to miss getting her criticism, too. Mr. Benton had just gone in when I crumpled up."

"She's a perfect angel," cried Patricia, her heart warming at the thought of Doris' genuine sweetness of nature. "If Miss Jinny really had known her, she'd been the last to suspect her."

"She's coming over after life class,"

Elinor went on, closing her eyes wearily. "I found I'd forgotten my keys when I got home, and she's going to bring them over for me on her way home."

"You'd better go to sleep," said Patricia, smoothing the white brow with deft fingers. "I'll keep everything quiet, so that you can sleep it off as you used to be able to. I hope you'll be all right in the morning."

Elinor nodded mutely, and Patricia, pulling down the shades so that the street light did not flicker on the pale wall, tiptoed out of the room, to caution Judith and await the coming of Doris Leighton.

Dinner was long over, Judith's lessons done and bed-time come, when at last Patricia hurried down to the long parlor where Doris sat in the dim light.

She was very pale and tired looking, but as graceful and charming as ever. She inquired after Elinor with a profuse sympathy that more than satisfied the warm-hearted Patricia, whose compassion stirred at her look of fatigue.

"You ought to be taking more care of yourself," she said, with concern. "You're

tired to death, and yet you come out of your way to see about Elinor. You look dreadfully fagged."

Doris smiled wanly. She laid an impulsive hand on Patricia's arm and opened her pretty lips, but before the words came she evidently obeyed another differing impulse, for she underwent a subtle change, an imperceptible hardening that was so delicately veiled by her still gracious manner that Patricia had only a baffling sense of being gently shut out from her real confidence.

"I've been working on my panel study," she said, with an effort at brightness. "I don't seem to get it finished to my liking, and the time is getting perilously short, you know."

Patricia looked her surprise. "Why, I thought you hadn't started it yet. You said you'd rush it off at the last moment without a bit of trouble."

"That's the way I usually do," assented Doris evenly. "But I'm going out of town on Saturday, and I have to turn it in before I leave tomorrow night. I'll

stay home and work on it in the morning, so I shan't see you perhaps before I go."

She said good-night absently, and Patricia, watching her hurry down the frosty street, found herself wondering at the subtle barrier that she could feel so keenly, while she yet tried to disbelieve.

"I wonder what she was going to say?" she thought, as she went slowly up to Judith's room, where she was to spend the night. "It can't be my imagination this time, for she actually did start to speak, and then stopped." She frowned and then her face cleared. "What a stupid I am—always getting up in the air about trifles! Doris Leighton is tired to death, and wanted to get home. She was just as pleasant as ever, even though she didn't have time or strength to be as sociable as she'd liked. If she hadn't felt an interest in Elinor, she'd not troubled to bring her keys back tonight. I hope she makes good with her prize study, now that she's gotten an idea for it. She's a stunning worker when she goes at it."

She tiptoed softly in to Elinor, who was

sleeping quietly, and she stood looking down at the sweep of eyelash and rounded cheek that the low-turned light caught out from the jumbled masses of dark hair.

"Dear old Norn," she thought fondly. "You'll be at the head of the night life, too, some day, like Doris is now, and you'll be cleverer than any of them, for you aren't ever a bit cocked up about yourself." Her eyes grew wide with thought. "That's the reason," she whispered triumphantly, "that you're going to be a howling success—you've got time to care about all the other things in life first, to think about them and to enjoy them. And that means O-RIG-INAL-ITY. You've got more ideas now than any of those old stagers, you adorable duck!" she ended, so overcome by her feelings that she dropped on her knees by the couch and pressed her warm lips on the dark hair.

Elinor merely stirred and mumbled something indistinct, much to the contrite Patricia's relief.

"I'll never learn to be composed and

considerate," she sighed as she crept in beside the slumbering Judith. "I'm crazy for Elinor to finish that lovely study of hers, and yet I'd wake her up just for my silly whims. She's got to get it done tomorrow if she can. Wish I could help her. Thank goodness, mine's done at last," and she drifted off to sleep with a jumble of prize designs and golden dreams for the future mingling with that recurring memory of Doris Leighton's hardening face as she spoke of her study for the library panel.

The next afternoon when Elinor, completely restored after a day's rest, took out her drawing-board and began to work, Patricia brought out her own study for a final criticism before laboriously lugging it up to the Academy.

Elinor and Judith were very enthusiastic over the intent, studious figure that bent over its book in such lifelike fashion.

"It's that air of real hard study that makes it so good," said Elinor, twirling the stool to catch every view of the figure.

"I don't know how you managed to get it so well."

"Well, Ju was studying hard and not merely posing," returned Patricia seriously. "Somehow it gets into the work. There isn't anything that tells the truth so straight as our sort of work, Norn. You simply can't fake. Judy deserves part of the credit. And then, I liked it so, I couldn't help getting on with it. It's so fearfully jolly to a *producer*."

Judith gave her pale locks a toss. "Why, we're all doing it!" she crowed. "You two in the Academy, and I at home here in my diary and my stories! Aren't we a talented lot!"

"*Stuff!*" said Patricia disgustedly. "You and I needn't brag yet a while, Judy. Elinor's the only one that's got a ghost of a showing. You've a long lane to run before you can even be considered, and I'm just common, every-day stuff like everyone else. This is just a flyer I'm taking in the company of my betters," and she gave a whimsical glance at Elinor with the insight that was occasionally hers in

brief glimpses. "I can't fly far, I warn you, but it's simply ripping while I'm on the wing!"

"Judy likes to see herself go by in the mirror," smiled Elinor leniently. "I suppose that's the literary mind."

"Literary grandmother!" exclaimed Patricia scornfully. "She's a conceited chicken that thinks she's a nightingale because she can peep louder than some. Wait till you've had some of your stuff printed, Judy, before you boast. Anyone can scribble——"

"You'll hurt her feelings, Miss Pat," protested Elinor, as Judith's dignified back disappeared into her own room and the door closed firmly. "She doesn't mean to be boastful."

"Nonsense! I'm her only hope," returned Patricia with spirit. "She won't amount to a row of pins if she goes on this way. Don't you worry about her feelings. She's got sense enough to know I'm right. Come along over to the Academy with me now. The walk will do you good, and I'll feel more respectable with a good-

looking escort while I'm lugging this huge thing."

They met Doris Leighton coming out of the students' door, and after a few inquiries found that she had just accomplished the same errand that Patricia was bent on. Her study for the prize panel was safely stowed away in the office of the curator.

"What was it like?" eagerly demanded Patricia. "It doesn't matter now, you know, if you tell. We won't tell, and it's too late, anyway, to make any difference."

Doris hesitated, undergoing again that subtle change that Patricia had seen before.

"I think I'll wait till they're all in," she replied softly. "It will be better for us all to be able to say truthfully that we had no idea of what the others were like till after ours were in. Don't you think so?"

"Of course it will," agreed Elinor heartily. "I'm glad you thought of it. I'd much rather not know. Mine isn't finished yet, and I'm so new at the work that I might be influenced."

"I thought about that," said Doris with

veiled eyes on Elinor's pale face. "I know how the same thought wave will pass through peoples' minds when they're working together, and I feel that one should be very careful not to influence another, particularly in a case like this."

"I'm not so sure that it makes a bit of difference," said Patricia carelessly. "I've heard of people miles apart having the same idea at the same time. Patents are always being duplicated, you know."

"Indeed they are!" cried Doris with singular fervor. "But the one who gets the idea first is always the real inventor. The jury wouldn't hesitate to decide on that, I'm positive, if anyone was so unfortunate as to turn in a duplicate of any of the studies."

After she had said good-bye and they were waiting at the curator's desk, Elinor spoke musingly.

"I wonder," she said, wrinkling her brows, "if Doris Leighton was afraid I'd garnish my panel with any of her ideas; she was so unnaturally stirred up about it."

Patricia, with her mind wholly on her own absorbing business, gave scant attention.

"She's rattled for fear she won't take the prize as usual," she said, gayly. "I bet she opens her eyes when she sees yours, Norn. Hers may be lots better done, but it simply can't be as lovely and as *different.*"

She pushed her bulky package carefully across the curator's counter, with an eager request that it be tenderly treated, and that official reassured her as to its entire safety by placing it at once in the locked ante-room where the modeling competition studies were stored.

"When will the prizes be announced?" she asked breathlessly, as the door clicked in its lock. "Shall we have to wait long?"

The curator smiled at her eagerness. "The library panel will be announced at noon on Tuesday in the first antique room," he said. "And the modeling class will be notified immediately before, while the class is still in session."

Patricia shivered with excited anticipa-

tion as they closed the heavy outer door of the Academy after them.

"*Jiminy*, I wish Tuesday were here and over!" she said fervently. "I'm scared stiff when I think of my poor little study with all those artists focusing their eagle eyes on it."

"It does seem ages to wait," agreed Elinor. "After I turn mine in tomorrow morning, I'll be consumed with curiosity to see the others—particularly Doris Leighton's."

CHAPTER XI

THE LITTLE RIFT

"WHAT do you think?" cried Patricia radiantly, swooping down on Elinor as she came slowly out of the portrait room at high noon on the momentous Tuesday. "What *do* you think, Elinor Kendall? I've gotten 'Honorable Mention' for my silly little old head! Isn't it wonderful? I'm so stunned I can't talk. I never dreamed it could have the ghost of a show," she rattled on ecstatically. "Miss Green was paralyzed, and Naskowski kept nodding till I thought he'd loosen his brain, and Griffin—she got first prize you know—cheered right out loud before them all. I was simply too limp for words, and I rushed out to tell you right away."

Elinor's eyes filled with a glad light, and she took Patricia in her arms. "It's perfectly glorious, Miss Pat, darling," she said

with a rapturous squeeze. "I'm so delighted I can't help kissing you on the spot," and she did it with a heartiness that made Patricia wriggle.

"Ouch, that's my loose wisdom-tooth you're pushing against!" she protested plaintively. "You've wobbled it all out of place, you reckless thing. There goes the crowd into the first antique. Come along or we'll be too late!"

The doors of the exhibition room were pushed quickly open as Mr. Benton led the expectant band of students in for their first sight of the prize designs, and Patricia's heart beat fast with the thrilling hope that Elinor's might be among the first in rank.

Her eyes swept one wall and then the other, searching for the familiar canvas, but all in vain, until she lifted them to the screen which stood in the center of the room, and where three canvases were hung, Elinor's below the other two.

"There it is!" she whispered eagerly, nudging Elinor to make her see. "It's on the screen. Oh, Norn, it *must* have——"

"Hush!" said Elinor in an undertone. "Don't make a fuss. There's Doris Leighton waving to us from the model stand. She looks awfully well, doesn't she? Her little vacation——"

But Patricia was impatiently deaf. "Why doesn't he get on?" she whispered testily. "We know all about the conditions of the prize. What we want to know is—oh, Elinor, I'm horribly disappointed. I was afraid Doris Leighton would get it, but you ought to have had Honorable Mention. Griffin's isn't half so good as yours; she said so herself. Can you see what their canvases are like? I'm just so that the light glares on them for me. What's that he's saying now? He's talking about your study."

The words cut the air with an incisive clearness that left no shadow of a doubt, though Patricia could scarcely credit her own ears.

"I regret to say that the third study on the screen," said Mr. Benton, toying with his eyeglass ribbon, "is merely placed there as a warning to students of all classes to

stick to their own ideas and imaginations, and not to attempt the hazardous task of copying stronger and more experienced workers. This canvas shows so much delicacy of appreciation of the subject that, had no other of absolutely the same design been previously turned in earlier, the jury should have given it the prize. Miss Leighton's cleverly executed study of precisely the same subject, while more finished in treatment, is far below this one in feeling, and it is a matter of regret to me that the student who executed it should not have possessed more originality and self-reliance. Miss Leighton will please come forward to receive the Roberts prize."

Of what followed—the bestowing and graceful acceptance of the pretty purse with the hundred dollars, the congratulations and murmurs of surprise that ran about the assembly—Patricia had little knowledge. Those astonishing words of Mr. Benton had so stung and bewildered her that the room swung about her dizzily and she clutched the back of a chair for support. Elinor's stricken face faded in

the blurred background of all the other faces, as she flung out vain hands of protest.

"Oh, it isn't fair—" she broke out, but the words that boomed so loudly in her ears were only a faint whisper, and she staggered blindly for a moment.

When she recovered herself in the dim corridor, Elinor, calm and reassuring, was on one side of her, while her other arm was in the firm grip of the cheery Griffin.

"That's all right, old pal," Griffin encouraged her. "You're almost into port now. Keep a stiff upper lip till we land you."

Patricia saw that they were steering for the dressing-room couch, and meekly allowed them their way.

"Now you're safe and sound, with no bones broken," said Griffin, as Patricia sank down on the roomy couch. "You're a nice one, you are, scaring us into a blue fit just when we were about to blister our paws with applause for the heroine of the day."

Patricia looked inquiringly at Elinor,

who smiled at her serenely in return, much to Patricia's bewilderment.

"But," she protested, raising herself on one elbow. "It wasn't true, what Mr. Benton said about your design. Why don't you tell him so, Elinor?"

Elinor merely shook her head gently, while Griffin stood in embarrassed silence.

"Why don't you *do* something?" cried Patricia again. "Why don't you tell him? Griffin, it wasn't true—that she copied it! You know she'd not do a thing like that!"

"Any fool knows that," replied Griffin gruffly. "If Leighton had any stuff in her, she'd have spoken up. I was just going to when I saw you begin to crumple. It wasn't etiquette for me to speak, but I'd have given them something to think of!"

"It's too late now to bother about denying it, Miss Pat dear," said Elinor soothingly. "It doesn't really matter much, you know, since we three know I didn't copy. After all, it's a very little thing. I'd rather be blamed unjustly than have done such a poor act. Don't

feel so badly about it, dear. We can tell our friends that it was a mistake on Mr. Benton's part, and they'll believe us, I'm sure. It doesn't matter for the rest."

"Doesn't it, really?" blazed Patricia, sitting up very stiff and straight. "Well, it may not to you, but to my mind it's as bad as telling any other untruth. You're not guilty of it, and if you let the accusation pass unnoticed, you are party to the falsehood."

Griffin, who was winking at her behind Elinor's back in a particularly portentous fashion, turned to the door.

"Calm down, Miss Pat," she said, with her hand on the knob. "I'm going to corral a few of the elect and put it to them. Brace up and look pleasant by the time I get back."

Patricia was about to break into angry tears on Elinor's neck, but the brisk and significant air with which Griffin spoke roused her to herself again. She put Elinor's arms away, and going to the mirror, smoothed her tumbled hair, and whisked away the telltale traces of her

collapse, while Elinor sat quietly on the edge of the couch watching her with fond anxiety.

Not a word was spoken till the door opened again, and Griffin with Doris Leighton and Miss Green came quickly in.

Doris Leighton, who was flushed and animated, went directly up to Elinor.

"It's a shame," she said, with a marked effort to subdue her own complacency. "Everybody knows you are much too conscientious to do such a thing. I've told everybody how shocked I am that Mr. Benton should make such a horrid mistake. It's simply a thought wave, and I've told everyone that you're not at all to blame."

Elinor looked at her very calmly, and said with a tinge of amusement in her level voice, "You must be very thankful that you got your study in first, for then you would have had to congratulate me instead of commiserating me."

Patricia felt rather ashamed of Elinor's lack of response to what she considered Doris' loyal support, and she broke out

gratefully, "You'll tell them all, won't you? They'll soon understand if *you* tell them!"

She had her reward in Doris' dazzling smile, and her assurances that she would do all she could to make Elinor's vindication speedy and thorough.

Elinor was more cordial to Miss Green's solemn and indignant protest against the powers that be. The stout monitor had so much genuine good feeling that the sincerity of her wrath could not be doubted.

"It is most unfair, unfair, Miss Kendall," she reiterated, with her two dewlaps solemnly wagging to and fro. "It is most unprofessional of Mr. Benton, and, even if you had copied (which of course no one dreams of saying), it would still be most indelicate to expose a student directly to the publicity of such a reprimand. I deplore it. I deplore it most heartily. And your manner of receiving the unmerited rebuke has made me admire you more than I can say."

Elinor thanked her with pretty gratitude.

"I shall make it a personal matter to

report to the committee," said Miss Green, as she prepared to follow the vanishing skirts of the prize bearer. "I shall certainly bring the matter to their notice before the next meeting," and with a cordial shake of Elinor's hand she sailed out, with her black cloak billowing behind her and her plume quivering with suppressed indignation.

"Isn't she the good old sport?" cried Griffin, in lively admiration. "She'll do the work of a half dozen niminy-piminy dolls like Leighton. Margaret Howes and your humble servant will back her up, too, and that committee will sit up and take notice before it's a week older, or my name's not Virginia Althea Frigilla Griffin—just like that."

It was hard work later on, when they had to face the inquiries of the wrathful Judith, to convince her that the whole thing was not a plot against Elinor by some envious rival.

"Mark my words, Elinor Kendall," she said impressively. "Some one is at the bottom of this, and I have my suspicions,

too, who that someone is. I'm not going to tell, for you girls always laugh at me, but I'm going to prove it to you before that committee meets that you're the victim of a conspiracy."

The relish with which Judith pronounced these ominous words made Elinor smile, but Patricia felt only aggravation at what she considered airs on Judith's part.

"Stuff and nonsense, Judy!" she said, impatiently. "You've been soaking your brain in fiction till you can't see straight. Don't you meddle with Elinor's affairs unless she gives you permission. You'll only make her ridiculous."

Judith, ignoring Patricia's pungent remarks, turned her calm eyes inquiringly to Elinor.

"You don't mind if I can help prove that someone else was the deceiver, do you, Elinor?" she asked with such seriousness that Elinor rippled with enjoyment:

"Bless your heart, kitten, make yourself as happy as you please with my affairs; only, I beseech of you, do it quietly and with as little martial music as possible."

Judith pulled herself free from Elinor's circling arms and made for the door, pausing on the threshold.

"As if I'd publish it on the housetops!" she cried in infinite disdain. "It's plain you aren't much up in detective stories."

After their laughter at her dramatic disappearance had died down, they sat quietly in the twilight watching the lamps flicker into life across the park, each one busy with her own thoughts.

"Do you know, Miss Pat," said Elinor, breaking a long silence "that I don't like Doris Leighton any more. It isn't because she got the prize—you know me better than to think that—but I've been noticing her more closely recently and I don't think she rings true."

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't, Norn," protested Patricia, in a small voice. "I do so want to have her for a friend. She's so lovely and talented and attractive. What is the matter with her now that you say such things? You didn't use to feel like that."

Elinor hesitated. "I don't know," she

replied slowly, measuring her words. "I can't put my finger on it, but she doesn't seem the same to me as she did at first. She isn't jealous of my poor work, of course, but I can feel a something—a wall or barrier—that she raises up between us whenever my work is spoken of. I felt it when we talked about the subject of the prize designs, and I felt it today more clearly than ever. We can't be friends any more as we were, I'm afraid. Something has come between us. 'The little rift within the lute,' " she quoted sorrowfully.

" 'That by and by will make the music mute,' " ended Patricia dismally. "Oh, I hope not, Norn. I hope it'll all turn out well and we can go on pleasantly and peaceably for the rest of the term. I hate rows and suspicions. I'd like to live 'in charity and love to all men,' but I'm always getting into scrapes. I no sooner learn to like a person than they turn out to be fakes."

"I haven't gone that far," Elinor gently reminded her. "I didn't mean to say that

Doris Leighton was a fake. I only meant that my feelings toward her had changed. You don't have to give up your admiration for her, Pat dear."

Patricia shook her head slowly from side to side. "'Whither thou goest I will go,'" she quoted. "I won't have her for a friend if she gives you the creeps, Norn, and you know it. I've been mistaken in people before, but you've always been the same old true blue. You and Miss Jinny know better than I do, and I give in. I won't be an enemy—you wouldn't want that—but I won't be a real friend like I have been, doing errands and helping her stretch canvases and all that. You and I will stand together always, old lady, and if the Roberts prize has done nothing but show us how very nice we each think the other is, it will have had its uses as far as we are concerned."

They sat in comfortable silence till they heard the front door slam and Judith's feet on the stair.

"I wonder what that young monkey is up to?" laughed Patricia as they heard

Judith moving about in her room, preparing for dinner with the alacrity of hungry virtue. "She won't let on for the world, but I know she's feeling mighty important about something. I can tell by the way she whisks about that she's enjoying herself immensely."

CHAPTER XII

JUDITH'S DISCOVERY

"I'LL never again say that the literary instinct is a burden and a reproach, Ju," said Patricia, with her eyes dancing and her head high. "Your thirst for 'plots' has proved too serviceable for me ever to point the finger of scorn in its direction."

It was a brisk, sunny day, and they were waiting for Elinor on the steps of the Academy. Judith was looking very happy, and Patricia, while she had a perturbed air, was no less triumphant in her manner.

"I wonder what keeps Elinor? She's awfully late," complained Judith, shifting on one foot. "Let's go in and have lunch without her."

Patricia shook her head decisively. "Not much. You'll wait here in solitude till she comes. I'm not going to have you spout it out before any old person, and

get us into hot water, perhaps. Here's Elinor now. Come on, Norn, we're about dead, standing on these flinty-hearted steps. Got the sandwiches you promised?"

Elinor showed a neat parcel tucked under her muff-arm. "Chicken and lettuce," she said delectably. "White grapes for dessert. Have you seen Margaret Howes and Griffin?"

Patricia nodded as she held the door wide for Elinor. "Griffin said she'd be ready for us, and Margaret Howes is coming straight down from composition class."

Elinor glanced at them as she went in. "You two look remarkably hilarious," she said casually. "Is it the spring in the air or the prospect of a festive lunch that so illuminates you?"

"Both and more too," laughed Patricia. "We've got a surprise for you, Norn, but we won't tell till we've had lunch; will we, Ju?"

"Not till the very last crumb is done for," declared Judith, emphatically, putting down her parcels on the dressing-room

couch. "You may not like it very much, Elinor——"

"Nonsense! Don't put such ideas in her head," cried Patricia stabbing her hat-pins into her hat to secure it on the hanger. "Of course, she'll be sorry for part of it, but right is right, and justice ought to be done. But there, I'll blab it all myself if I don't look out. Hurry up, Judy, let's get the cocoa stewing while Elinor prinks."

They had the table arranged in gala array, and the cocoa steaming in its receptacle, before Elinor and Margaret Howes joined them.

"Griffin says not to wait—she's got to finish stretching a canvas," Margaret Howes told them, but Patricia and Judith would not hear to beginning the little feast without the staunch and genial Griffin.

"There's no hurry, anyway," insisted Patricia. "The cocoa will keep hot on the corner of the stove and the rest of the things don't matter. You girls haven't any classes this afternoon, so we have an eternity to feed in."

They loitered about the room, chatting

at various tables, and were taken by surprise at last by the breathless arrival of their late guest. She hailed them with an air of the bearer of important news, and as soon as they were ensconced in their corner with the cocoa safely bestowed on a stool at Patricia's right hand, she opened her heart.

"Awful row in the Committee room," she announced gleefully. "Good old Greenie marched right in to the grave and reverend seniors while they were in session just now, and she gave them ballyhoo. *She* called it a remonstrance in the cause of justice, but, my word, it was ripping!"

"What was it all about?" asked Patricia, much diverted by the picture of the mournful monitor facing the dreaded Board. "What did she say?"

Griffin chuckled. "You see, I was in the ante-room, cataloguing the prints—you know I got that job last week. Well, the Board was droning on in the big room in their usual uninteresting fashion and I was deep in admiration of a Rembrandt etching—that one with the hat and the open

window behind him—when Green sails past me, head up and majesty writ large on her bulging brow. She always does put on lugs when she reports to the Committee, so I didn't sit up and take notice right away. But in a minute or two I came to life, I can tell you! She was rolling off the sentences about 'injustice to a high-minded student' and 'unnecessary humiliation' and 'reparation to one who was an ornament to any school,' and a lot of other junk like that. I tell you, I could have hugged the old girl! The Board just sat still, like school-boys caught stealing jam, and she went on, getting more flowery all the time."

"But what—" began Patricia again.

Griffin waved her to silence. "All of a sudden she seemed to realize that she was giving them a drubbing instead of a gentle rebuke. She hauled in her sails and stood winking at them behind her huge spectacles, while they all sat staring at her. It was a picture, I can tell you. Then dear old Farrer cleared his throat in that nervous way he has, and he bowed to Bottle

Green as though she were the finest ever. 'We have heard with surprise and I am sure with regret,' he says, 'Miss Green's account of this matter. I think we will all agree that an investigation should be undertaken, and if there has been injustice done, such reparation as is possible shall be made.' Then they came and closed the door and I lit out for here. You've got a fine champion, Kendall Major, and we'll all see you through if it comes to a public demonstration, you can gamble on that!"

Elinor's face was perplexed. "But I don't see what can be done," she said gently. "I'd hate to have the thing dragged up before the school again. Of course, if it had been denied right then and there, I'd have been very glad, but now, after all these days——"

"It's only a week," protested Margaret Howes, firmly. "We had to wait till the Board met, you know."

"They can make an announcement, just as the prize announcement was made," explained Griffin, drumming impatiently on the table. "You may be too modest

to be there, but it can be put through without you, and you will be cleared, don't you see?"

"Is Miss Green still in the Committee room?" asked Patricia suddenly.

"Of course," returned Griffin, shortly. "She had other reports to make. She usually stays about half an hour, she'll be longer today. Why?"

"I thought I'd like to have her here," she said, with a sidelong glance at Judith. "We've found out something about——"

She stopped, trying to arrange her speech so as to present the intended disclosure in the clearest form possible, but Judith, whose cheeks had been burning at Griffin's account of the interview in the Committee room, took the words out of her mouth.

"We've found out all about it!" she cried triumphantly. "Doris Leighton copied Elinor's design, and put it in ahead of Elinor! I know all about it, and I'll tell Miss Green and the whole committee, too, if I have to!"

Griffin was the first of the three to

recover. She leaned forward, a thin, eager hand on Judith's arm.

"Say that again, young one," she demanded imperatively. "Make it good and plain this time."

Judith repeated her startling statement, adding that she had proof for everything she said. Her manner was so genuine and convincing that Griffin started up with a quick gesture of command.

"Don't say another word till I get back," she said, authoritatively, and was gone before any questions could be formed.

They sat in absolute silence, absently watching the occupants of the now nearly deserted tables straggle out in twos and threes, until the room was quite empty, and Patricia could bear it no longer.

"We don't have to petrify, do we?" she said, with a nervous ripple. "Griffin may keep us sitting here for hours——"

Judith's dramatic sense asserted itself, and she frowned at Patricia's frivolous interruption of the portentous silence.

"Do be still, Miss Pat," she said sedately.

"We've waited two whole days already—five minutes more won't hurt us."

Margaret Howes glanced at Elinor, as she sat quietly with chin in one pink palm, her brows drawn level and her dark eyes steady and thoughtful.

"You're a wonder, Kendall Major," she broke out. "Here am I all fluffed up and on positive pins and needles over this affair, while you are as calm as a picture. Don't you feel excited? Aren't you wild to hear what it is?"

Elinor laid her hands on the table and Patricia could see that the fingers were twisted together until the knuckles showed white.

"Of course, I am anxious," she said evenly. "But I've had a different sort of life from most girls, and it's taught me that there's always a lot more to any surprise than we're looking for. I've been wondering just how much pain there's going to be, back of the pleasure of being set right in the eyes of the school."

"There oughtn't to be any for *you*," said Margaret Howes, impulsively laying

her hand on Elinor's. "There isn't anything coming to you but plain every-day satisfaction in getting your rights."

"Ah, but how about Doris?" questioned Elinor sadly. "Isn't she to be remembered?"

"Why should she be?" returned the other warmly. "Did she have any thought for anything but her own parade when she pretended to be sorry for you? There's such a thing as carrying virtue too far, my dear girl, and I think you're straining your charity with too fine a sieve."

Elinor smiled a wistful little puckered smile. "Perhaps I am rather lop-sided in my feelings," she confessed. "I always feel so dreadfully sorry for the wrong-doers, and the less they care the sorrier I am."

Patricia had opened her lips to sustain Margaret Howes' point of view, when Griffin, followed by Miss Green, came breathlessly in to the room.

"Now we're all ready," she said eagerly when they had made room for the generous figure of the monitor. "Fire away

with your tale, young one, and don't spare the details. We're game for any length of story, so long as you can prove it."

Judith, with her cheeks flushing and paling and her composed tones carrying conviction, laid the story of her discoveries before them, telling them how she had thought of it first "for fun, like a plot for a story," and then how she had remembered that Doris Leighton had Elinor's keys with access to the locker where the two studies for the prize designs were left that night that Elinor was taken ill; how she had discovered through Doris' younger sister that Doris had made her study for the Roberts prize from a little rough color sketch "just like Elinor had."

"I'd heard her say the Saturday that Miss Jinny came to see us that she never made sketches beforehand," said Judith, earnestly. "And she told Patricia the very day Elinor fainted that she hadn't begun her study. So I pretended to myself that we were all in a story, and I thought and thought what I should make of it if I were reading about it all instead

of living in it. Then I saw that the thing to do was to find out if Doris Leighton had the little color sketch that she used for her study, and compare it with Elinor's."

Here Elinor gave a start, and then composed herself as Judith went on.

"I hunted and hunted for Elinor's, which I knew very well, for it was made on the back of one of my old tablets, but I couldn't find it. Geraldine couldn't find the one Doris used either, and then I got awfully interested. I told Geraldine that I was making up a story and I wanted to act it all out in life, and she was glad to help. She was mad at Doris anyway, and so she hunted everywhere for her sketch, but she couldn't find it. I was pretty near giving up then, for I thought I was mistaken; but the men were just making ready to take out Leighton's ashes when I thought, like a flash, 'There's where it would be, if anywhere,' and I told Geraldine. So we got sticks and we rummaged. My gracious, but it was dusty!"

Patricia gave a gasp of comprehension.

"That's what made you so grimy that day Mrs. Halden came in for tea!" she exclaimed.

Judith nodded. "We found it!" she went on, growing more excited as the end approached. "We found it, all in little bits, along with other stuff from Doris' waste basket!"

The girls looked at one another in shamed silence. The actual discovery of the deception was so much more disconcerting than they had foreseen. They seemed to visualize Doris Leighton as she tore those guilty fragments and hid them in the rubbish, and the sight sickened them.

Griffin held out a hand for Judith's envelope. "You'll verify these, Kendall?" she said brusquely, pushing the bulky oblong across the table to Elinor.

Spread out on the cloth, the scraps pieced perfectly into the study that Elinor had made for the Roberts prize. The back showed the stamp of the Keystone tablet, with Judith's name partly erased and Doris' scribbled over it.

"It's my sketch," admitted Elinor in a low tone. "I missed it the next day, but I thought Miss Pat had dropped it when she brought my things home to me. My study was almost done, and I forgot all about it after that."

There was a disconcerting silence, while Judith breathed hard and kept her eyes glued on Miss Green.

Suddenly Patricia spoke. "It's a horrid mess, and I'm sorry that it had to come out, but there's no use shirking, is there? If someone, no matter who, stole your hat, you'd feel they should be brought to justice. Isn't stealing an idea a lot worse? I don't really think you ought to feel so badly, Elinor. If Doris Leighton could do such a thing, and then be friends with you afterward, she isn't worth breaking your heart over. I felt badly enough when Ju told me, but I've kept getting madder and madder, as I've seen how she goes on acting her part of kind friend to you."

Miss Green rose majestically and Griffin sprang up at the same time.

"I shall ask to be allowed to have the

evidence," said the impressive representative of justice. "There is no time to be lost. Come, Miss Griffin, I shall need you and Miss Howes too."

At the door she turned, with expansive kindliness.

"Do not distress yourself, my dear Miss Kendall," she said, benignantly. "There is no cause for apprehension. Absolute secrecy and perfect amenity will prevail. You will be sent for later perhaps, but nothing unpleasant will occur. Depend upon it, the Board will welcome this revelation of the true state of affairs, and will do its duty gently."

CHAPTER XIII

RESTITUTION

"DID you see Elinor?" whispered Judith to Patricia, as she edged her way to her in the packed assembly room.

Patricia shook her head. "She's with Griffin and Bottle Green," she answered under her breath. "What do you want her for?"

Judith's bow was on one eye and her hat under her arm, showing that she had made great haste to join the growing crowd in the first antique room. She looked even more agitated than Patricia had expected her to be.

"What's the matter?" insisted Patricia, nudging her to compel her attention, but Judith's gaze was wandering all about in search of Elinor, and she answered absently.

"There she is, up on the stand with Griffin," she murmured in dismay. "I

can never let her know. I wish I could catch her eye; can't you signal her, Miss Pat? You're taller than I am."

"What'll I tell her, if I do?" demanded Patricia indignantly. "I haven't any idea what you want to telegraph?"

"Tell her Bruce Haydon is here," said Judith. "Oh, there she goes! I was afraid you couldn't get her. She's sitting down beside Miss Green now, and we'll never be able to let her know."

"Bruce Haydon!" exclaimed Patricia, astonished. "Why, he's in Italy, isn't he? Elinor had a letter yesterday——"

"He's here all the same," said Judith, interrupting her surprise. "And he sent a message to Elinor, so she'd be prepared, I guess. But I simply can't get to her now. She'll have to find it out for herself."

"What's Bruce doing here?" asked Patricia, as they resigned themselves to the inevitable and prepared to await the event.

"He says he finished his studies, and has come back because he wanted to keep an eye on you two art students," replied Judith. "He looks awfully well. You

ought to have seen them stare when he grabbed me up and kissed me in the corridor just now."

Patricia gave a happy sigh. "It'll be good to have him around again," she said appreciatively. "I never knew how weak in the knees I was until this very moment. Things are bound to go right with Bruce hovering around. I hope Elinor sees him. She's feeling mighty shaky right now, I fancy."

"Isn't it queer how wobbly one feels?" commented Judith uneasily. "We've been crazy for the time to come, and now we feel like running away. I know I'll simply *drop* when Mr. Benton makes his speech."

"Nonsense," said Patricia stoutly, although her own knees were not too steady. "Keep your eyes on Elinor, and remember how glad you are that she's getting an official apology, after all the cheating and nastiness—then you won't want to collapse."

"Sounds like you were prescribing for yourself," retorted Judith with a flash of intuition. "You look just as——"

"Hush, he's coming," warned Patricia,

turning pale in spite of her brave words. "Listen, he has begun."

Her eyes sought the pale pure outline of Elinor's profile, caught between the intervening faces, and held it during the brief explanatory speech, wherein Mr. Benton paid his tribute to Elinor's generous silence, and apologized in the name of the Board for the unjust accusation. She saw the wave of color sweep over it at the commendatory words, and the dark eyes fall under the shame of the hinted treachery of the unnamed student whose face was in every one's mind. Then at the next words she saw the light flash into full radiance, as Mr. Benton, with something in his extended hand, turned full toward Elinor where she sat.

"And now, Miss Kendall," he finished with grave satisfaction in every word. "It is my privilege to award to you the Roberts prize of one hundred dollars, in recognition of the meritorious work done by you in the late competition. Will you kindly come forward to receive it?"

There was a general murmur of surprise and a following rustle of gratification.

Patricia's eyes were too blurred with happy tears to see very clearly, but she made out Elinor's figure bowing over the same purse that Doris Leighton had received ten short days ago, and she whispered to herself joyously, "Dear old Norn, they've more than paid up for all the horridness now, haven't they? And you deserve it all, too."

Judith, whose eyes were still wide with astonishment, touched her arm.

"Did you know?" she asked breathlessly. "Did anyone know she was going to get it?"

"Can't you tell by looking at them?" demanded Patricia. "Do they look as though they'd expected anything like this? Of course we didn't know. The Board didn't even peep to Bottle Green, for she's gaping like the rest."

"I see," acknowledged Judith, sweeping the ringleaders with her sharp scrutiny. "They're all simply stunned, but they're mighty glad, too. They're going to give the Academy Howl. Oh, Patricia, I wish I could howl, too!"

"Go ahead, if you can do it," said a

masculine voice at her elbow. "The Academy won't object, I'm sure."

Patricia turned with a gasp of delight. "Bruce!" she cried delightedly. "You dear thing! You've come in the nick of time. Isn't it splendid that Elinor's won the prize? Did you hear about it? Aren't you perfectly crazy over it?"

Bruce laughed good-naturedly as he shook hands.

"I can't undertake to answer all that at once, Miss Pat," he said. "Let's go find what Elinor thinks about it."

He pushed a way for them to the group which surrounded the flushed and gracious recipient of the Roberts prize, and before Patricia quite realized how he did it, he had them ensconced with Elinor in a cozy corner of the print room, and had heard the whole story of the stolen design.

"It's a good thing you two innocents have a responsible person like Judith to look after you," he said seriously. "I don't know what you'd do without a protector to play providence for you."

Judith flushed and tossed her mane with

a gratified air. "Oh, they don't think much of *me*," she rejoined. "They make fun of me lots of times."

"Is that so?" said Bruce, with great concern. "I'm sorry to hear that. I tell you what, Judy, we'll form a partnership, you and I, and we'll see to it that they behave themselves better in the future. They've proved that they can't take proper care of themselves, so we'll have to play guardian angels."

Elinor merely smiled her gentle, affectionate smile, but Patricia rippled out in mocking laughter.

"I like that!" she cried. "Who took care of us all those years when we were poor and alone in the world? It's late in the day for Elinor to need protectors."

"Nevertheless, she's going to have 'em," declared Bruce with undisturbed geniality. "You may mock us and you may shock us and you may say you don't care, but we're on the job for keeps, aren't we, Judith, *ma chère?* And the first step we're going to take in our new position is to drag you both off to luncheon this very minute.

You'd best give in gracefully, for both Judy and I are fearfully strong and ferocious."

Judith giggled, but Patricia rose briskly.

"I guess you won't have to chloroform us to drag us there this time," she retorted. "I'm glad we're presentable, anyway. Aren't you thankful I made you put on your best duds, Norn? There's nothing like being contented when one feeds, and I couldn't partake of the stalled ox with any satisfaction in my old school rags."

Judith cuddled close to Bruce on the settee while Elinor went for her wraps.

"Patricia's awfully superficial, I think," she confided to him cheerfully, as she watched her readjusting her bright hair beneath the pretty hat rim at the quaint old mirror of the bookcase. "She's so set on pretty things. She just worships anyone who is pretty—no matter whether she understands their character or not. I wish we could make her more serious-minded and careful."

"Pooh," said Patricia, turning from her own reflection with a gay laugh. "You

don't need to try. I do worship beauty, and I always shall. I like to laugh and sing and be happy. I like blue skies because God made them that way. And I don't think a pink rose is wickeder for being pink than if it were grubby gray. *I* think being happy is the serious business of life—when you take other people in with you—and I reckon God thinks so too."

"Pa-tri-cia!" ejaculated Judith in prim rebuke, but Bruce gave her hand a restraining squeeze, and Patricia went on, glowing with earnestness.

"There isn't any more goodness in dismal looks, no, nor half so much, as in happy faces. Don't the cherubim sing eternally? Is there anything said about dark days in the New Jerusalem? I'm ashamed of you, Judith Kendall, for not knowing that it's twice as brave and good to be cheerful and pretty as it is to be moping and dull. Look at Elinor—would we love her if she'd been fussing about the hard times we had? Not much! Every bright smile she had for those horrid

times has made her more adorable to me and I look on every bit of happiness we had in those poor days as just so much wrested from the powers of darkness." She stopped suddenly, with a little gasp of embarrassment, as Elinor entered.

"Patricia's spouting again," remarked Judith with the serene cruelty of extreme youth. "I didn't mind, because I'm used to it, but I guess Bruce is thankful you didn't keep us any longer, Elinor."

Bruce rose and held out his hand to Patricia, who was flushing painfully.

"Don't mind the kid, Miss Pat dear," he said, with his most winning smile. "She doesn't know any better yet. Your religion is the sort we've got to *grow* into, and, even then, some of us aren't ever quite big enough to realize it."

Judith's face had been undergoing swift changes during this short speech, but now it cleared and a beatific expression shone upon it.

"I know what you mean, now, Miss Pat," she declared loftily. "I've read it in Stevenson's verses, about 'those who

. . . sow gladness in the peopled lands.' Isn't that it, Bruce? I didn't *quite* understand the way Patricia put it, but I think it's perfectly lovely, really I do."

Bruce pinched her cheek, with a tolerant laugh.

"It's all right, so long as it's in a book, eh?" he asked. "What a perfect little chameleon you are, Judy Kendall. I don't know whether to take you into the grand surprise that I'm going to spring on these two young ladies, or leave you at the nearest library while I disclose my dark projects. What do you say, Elinor?"

Elinor slipped Judith's nervous hand into her muff within her own.

"I think we might let her share with us this time," she said gently, and Judith's relief was beautiful to behold.

"Bruce says we're going to a French restaurant," she announced proudly. "I hope I can remember enough French to talk politely. Mademoiselle makes us say so many fine sentences when we have our 'calling days' in the French class that I

get awfully twisted and never know whether I'm masculine or feminine."

"You won't need to think about it here," said Bruce. "The waiters are both Belgians and they speak English pretty well. You know that English is taught in the public schools in Belgium, and even the little children can say a few words to you. It's the old folks that don't understand."

Judith flew back to his side, pushing Patricia ahead to Elinor.

"Oh, do tell me all about it," she pleaded, and Bruce, with his customary good nature, launched into a very diverting account of the habits and customs of the Flemings and the year spent among them in his student days.

The first breath of spring was in the air, softening the chill of the crowded streets with warming sunshine and a hint of the coming miracle of the yearly resurrection. The shops were filled with the crisp, fresh-tinted goods of the nearing season, and here and there among the smartly dressed women was a modish straw hat brighten-

ing the winter furs and velvets. Patricia's cup was full and running over. She had no need for speech with Elinor, but she kept giving her hands quick little squeezes in her muff, while now and again they exchanged swift telegraphic glances of appreciation.

Bruce swung the door for them, and they passed into a little narrow shop-like place.

Judith's eyes were wide and dismayed.

"I don't think this is very nice," she whispered as Bruce was exchanging a few words with the smiling proprietor in the little cage behind the tiny counter.

"Hush," cautioned Patricia, using her eyes industriously. "It must be all right, or Bruce wouldn't have brought us. I like it. The floor is *sanded*, Judy! And those people at the snippy little tables under the stairs are French—just hear them gabble to the waiter."

Judith recovered sufficiently to take notice.

"There isn't any table—" she had begun, still with slight protest in her voice, when Bruce ushered them up the narrow

vertical stair to the larger room above where more tables and windows made a cozy dining place for about a dozen people.

The waiter, a broad-faced Belgian, rushed forward with a smile of genuine welcome and a flourish of the spotless towel which he wore upon his left shoulder, and, with a few murmured words in French, motioned them to a table by the front window.

When they were being settled in their places, Judith found opportunity to whisper to Bruce, who immediately turned to the Belgian, who was helping Patricia remove her coat.

"You have good custom today, François," he said with a gesture toward the chattering groups at the other tables.

The waiter bowed as he folded the coat carefully.

"Yes, Mr. Haydon, sir," he said clearly. "We do not complain. Our trade keeps up, sir. We are the same as when you left, sir. We do not complain."

Patricia laughed at Judith's expression, as she watched François whisk away to the dumb-waiter in the far corner of the little

apartment, and roar stentorian commands in indistinguishable French to an unseen source of supply below.

"He just uses his French to plot his dark plots with, Judy darlin'," she said, merrily. "You needn't try to make them out, for he doesn't intend you to."

"I heard 'chateaubriand,' anyway," retorted Judith triumphantly. "And that means beefsteak. So I did understand something, you see."

Bruce made a gesture of mock despair. "Heavens, I'm discovered!" he cried, with a twinkle. "Judy knows just what she's going to have for lunch, and there won't be any surprise, after all."

Patricia looked inquiringly at him.

"Is *that* the grand surprise you meant, Bruce Haydon? Sure you aren't fooling us? Oh, you are! You've got *something* else—I know it by your eyes. You look awfully guilty."

"Do I?" asked Bruce innocently. "I wish there was a mirror here so I could see how that looks. Here comes François with the bouillon and omelets. Don't let him

see me, please, till I've gotten up a better expression."

François served them deftly, while still attending to all the other tables, and Patricia, in the intervals of merry chatter, wondered at the innumerable bits of respectful conversation he managed to supply his patrons in addition to his very satisfactory table service, and she said so to Bruce, just as the dessert had been placed and François had withdrawn to a party of newcomers.

Bruce, however, was remarkably absent in his reply.

"Yes, he's a wonder," he said, cracking nuts studiously. "I hope he's as good on breakfasts as he used to be."

"Breakfast!" cried Patricia, bubbling. "Are we going to keep on eating till——"

"No, no, I didn't mean that," returned Bruce hastily. "I was thinking of something else."

"The surprise, I am sure," announced Judith calmly. "Let's try to guess what it is, like charades or Dumb Crambo. You can tell us if we guess right, Bruce. I'll begin first."

Bruce laid down his cracker with a grin. "No, you don't, young 'un," he said decisively. "I'm not going to turn my choicest possession into a puzzle department. I'm going to spring it myself, right now."

All eyes were upon him as he crumpled his napkin into a hard ball and crushed it between his flexible fingers, while his face assumed an earnest and rather anxious expression.

"I am going to ask you to think first and speak last," he began. "I don't want you to go into it hastily or unless you're quite sure you will like it."

"We'll like it, all right enough, if you have a hand in it," Patricia assured him heartily.

"It's a scheme I've been thinking of for nearly a month now, and I've made all the arrangements before I came home; but if it doesn't appeal to you—well, there are no bones broken, and I can easily fix it up with Miss J—— that is, I can make other arrangements."

Judith gave an impatient wriggle, but it was Patricia again who spoke.

"Please, please, *do* tell us what it is! Suspense is so awful!"

Bruce cocked his head on one side meditatively. "I'll make a stab at it," he acceded, and then paused, while they waited in breathless silence.

"I've taken a studio apartment, and I've got someone to keep house—just for a month—and I'm banking on you all coming to spend that month with me. I want you to have this chance at some outside work," he said to Elinor. "I'm not so keen on this academic work for a steady job. I want you to keep up your life class, of course, but there's a big lot of education lying around in the studios for this short time anyway. I may not be able to offer it to you again, as I'll have to be off as soon as this contract is finished. Will you come?"

Elinor sat looking at him with her eyes shining, and then she drew a quick breath.

"I think it would be perfectly glorious," she said gratefully. "It's wonderful that you should bother with us. I can't thank you——"

"Don't want any thanks," returned Bruce

gruffly. "Your aunt would understand it. I'm only beginning to pay my debt to her, and it's going to take a mighty long while, too."

Patricia held out her hand across the cloth. "I can't kiss you, but here's the substitute. You're a *duck*, Bruce Haydon. Where is the studio?"

Bruce laughed in a relieved way. "That's the way to talk, Miss Pat. I'll show it to you as soon as you've all finished. Judy, haven't you anything to say?"

Judith finished dabbling her fingers in the finger-bowl, and wiped them daintily. Then she raised her clear eyes to the expectant company.

"The only thing I'm afraid of is that Mrs. Hudson won't let us go a whole month sooner," she said with the calmness of despair. "I suppose I'll have to stay there all by myself, just because I'm the youngest and not an artist. But I tell you all this—I'm not going to stay alone. I'll get Mrs. Shelly to come in——"

"Good idea, Judy," said Bruce encouragingly. "We'll see what we can do about

it. Come along now, we're going to inspect the new premises. You girls get your duds on while I settle up. It's only around the corner, and we'll be there in a jiffy."

CHAPTER XIV

NEW QUARTERS AND OLD FRIENDS

THEY went up in the little box of an elevator, and as they got out, Bruce jingled his keys invitingly.

"I'll let you open the door—for luck, Judy," he said, holding out a key. "See if you can guess which door it belongs to."

Judith scanned the doors critically, her brows puckered and her head aslant.

"We-e-ll," she said, slowly revolving so as to see each hall in turn. "I'll take the one just ahead there. It hasn't any card on the door and all the others have."

"Clever child!" commended Bruce. "That escaped my notice. You're right, of course. Go ahead. Open up.'

Judith put the key in its lock, turned it easily and then swung the door wide, but before the others could catch even a glimpse of the interior, she gave a little squeaking

cry and rushed in, leaving the door to bang after her.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Patricia indignantly. "We're locked out!"

"We can ring if Bruce has no other key," said Elinor hastily. "She'll surely let us in."

So, as there was no other key, Patricia put her finger to the bell on the lintel and kept it there till the knob rattled and the door was flung open wide. Judith was standing in the middle of the big, comfortable studio and her face was flushed, but not one word did she say in explanation of her singular behavior.

Elinor and Patricia were so occupied with the room that she almost escaped reproof, but Patricia, as she turned from admiring the stairway that wound up one side of the studio to a nook in the peaked roof above, caught a very knowing look on her little sister's face which was meant for Bruce, and she pounced on her immediately.

"What *is* the matter with you today, Ju?" she asked in an undertone, "I do wish you'd behave yourself. Bruce will be

sorry he asked us if we're going to act like wild Indians."

Judith's only reply was a giggle.

Bruce and Elinor were inspecting the rooms on the other side of the studio, and had passed out of sight behind the second doorway. Patricia forgot her censorship as the spirit of the explorer rose in her.

"Let's look at these rooms, Ju," she proposed, with a hand on the heavy curtain at her right.

Judith caught her hand with a cry of dismay.

"It's not fair, till Elinor comes, too!" she protested hotly. "Wait, they'll be back. I'll call them."

But Patricia, with a laugh, broke from her and lifted the curtain.

"Elinor didn't wait for us," she began gayly, "and I'm not——"

She broke off with her mouth and eyes opened to their widest, for there in the chair by the cozy grate sat Mrs. Shelly, while Miss Jinny stood chuckling her husky chuckle and rubbing her elbows nervously with both hands.

"They've come to stay!" shouted Judith in wild excitement. "They're going to be here the whole month! Wasn't it lovely of Bruce to get them, and won't it be *transcendant*, with all of us together!"

Patricia had for once no words, but she fell on Miss Jinny's willing neck, and to Judith's great wonder and Mrs. Shelly's delight, she kissed Miss Jinny with great vigor and despatch.

"You *duck!*" she cried, and, although Judith gasped and paled at the audacious epithet, Miss Jinny merely chuckled and patted her tenderly and then passed her on to the smiling, pink-cheeked little old lady in the rocker.

Such a time as they had all together when Elinor and Bruce joined them! And such a happy circle as they made around the studio fire, as twilight came on and the shadows crept out from the vast corners of the big room, and they made plans for the future and compared notes as to the past months of separation, with the cheerful flicker leaping and flaring on their ruddy faces, quite as it had in the old house at Rockham.

"Do you remember how we planned for this year?" said Patricia, her chin on her hand and her eyes on the leaping flame. "That was at Christmas time, only three short months ago, and we've all broken our plans already. David and Judy are the only ones who have stuck to theirs, and that is mainly because they can't help themselves. Here am I, studying at the Academy, after vowing I'd not waste money on myself at all. Elinor is dropping half her studies there and starting on an entirely new course—Interior Decoration and Stained Glass—under Mr. Bruce Haydon's personal supervision; and as for Mrs. Shelly and Miss Jinny—they are so far out of their plans I don't believe they'll ever get back into them again."

Miss Jinny gave a snort of defiance. "Just you wait till this month is over, Patricia Louise Kendall," she said belligerently. "I'll be back in that old rut so tight you won't be able to see where I ran in again. Not go back to housekeeping with mama, indeed! I'll bet that I put up as many extra pickles and jams this year as I

ever did, and with the exception of having the library and you people and the Haldens again, I don't see much change ahead of me, I can tell you!"

Patricia sighed and stretched herself luxuriantly.

"Well, I haven't any complaint to make with the new arrangements," she said expansively. "Things keep getting deliciouser and deliciouser all the time. I only wish we didn't have to go back to the boarding house tonight——"

"Indeed, you're not going to budge a step!" said Miss Jinny triumphantly. "We planned it all out. You're to stay here and begin to be at home right off. You can go and pack tomorrow and have your things sent over as soon as you please."

"But," insisted Elinor, "we haven't anything——"

Again Miss Jinny interrupted.

"I got your negligees and all from Mrs. Hudson this morning," she chuckled. "She knows you won't be back, and she's just as well pleased, for she's a good chance to rent your rooms right away, and I told

her to go ahead. She'll keep your things till tomorrow or the next day. Now, come along and choose bunks, though there isn't much choice, for there is only one big room with three beds in it. Mama and I are right next to you, you see."

The rooms on the right of the studio, a small one with a double bed in it for Miss Jinny and her mother, and the enormous room with the three beds for the girls, were separated by a tiled bath and were quite remote from the rooms on the other side, where was a corresponding small room to be used for a sitting-room, and a slightly larger one for Bruce. Altogether, the arrangement was as satisfactory as could be wished and everyone was enthusiastic over the many comforts and conveniences that the place boasted.

"Fortunate that Symons had to hurry off to South America for that commission, wasn't it?" said Bruce, rubbing his hands before the fire. "We couldn't have got a snugger place, and just for the length of time we want it. I told Miss Jinny it would be flying in the face of Providence

for her to refuse to come and occupy it."

Judith had been studying the problem of the rooms, and now put her question. "But where are we to have our meals?" she ventured. "I don't see any dining-room."

"They are coming in from Dufranne's and we're going to imbibe them in that room to the left," replied Bruce with a wave toward the sitting-room. "When we feel like it, we're going to Dufranne's for them." He turned to Mrs. Shelly with an air of charming courtesy that sat well on his strong face. "Are you still in the humor for dining out, madam?" he asked, in a tone easily heard by her.

Mrs. Shelly nodded, smiled her twinkly smile and rose with alacrity.

"I'll put on my new bonnet," she promised, and trotted off to her room, smoothing the tails of her basque with eager fingers.

"She's just as happy as a lark," said Miss Jinny to the others. "I was so scared for fear she'd hate town life, but,

lands alive, she takes to it like a duck to water. I shouldn't wonder if it did her a lot of good. She's been uncommonly quiet recently, and I believe she's been missing you girls."

Mrs. Shelly in her new bonnet with a gay little pansy on it, Miss Jinny in another bran new hat, made quite a festive appearance, and the great humor of them both and their sincere pleasure in being so important a part in the little home group gave an added zest to the evening's merry-making.

"Ju hasn't let go of Mrs. Shelly's hand since we left the restaurant," said Patricia apart to Elinor, as they were taking off their wraps in the studio again. "Poor little kid, she certainly does worship that dear little old lady."

"How she'd have adored mother, if she had only lived," said Elinor softly. "Mother was so lovely. I always feel that you two have been cheated out of so much—not even to have a dim memory of her."

Patricia's face grew wistful. "She went

away when I was so little," she murmured absently. "Sometimes I do fancy that I can recall how she looked as she kissed me good-bye in the big station, but it must be only fancy—one doesn't remember much at two years old. I can see just how Judy looked though, when they brought her home after mother died, and I was only three and a half then."

"What are you two conspirators hatching up over there in the corner?" called Bruce from the fireside. "We're making out our schedule, and you don't know what you're missing!"

Settled in their places—they already had their own selected places in the ingle nook—with Mrs. Shelly rocking contentedly in the center of the half circle and Bruce smoking in the deep armchair, they grew enthusiastic again over the delightful prospect of the month that Bruce outlined for them

"Judy, of course, will go to school," he said, blowing a little smoke ring at her. "Miss Pat will go to the sculpturing as usual, but may have a hand in any game here

that she is able to hold up. You'll learn a heap, Paddy Malone, if you keep those ears of yours open, for Grantly, the fellow who is doing the bas-reliefs for the State Capitol building, will be about occasionally, and he's a cracker-jack in his line."

"See here," interrupted Miss Jinny, cocking her eyes severely at Bruce. "I'm not going to have Patricia hobnobbing with those *Bohemians!*"

Bruce roared with laughter. "My dear Dragon!" he cried, "don't you be afraid of your precious charges. Grantly hasn't any time to waste on young 'uns like Miss Pat. He's *working*, I tell you, and he doesn't like young ladies, anyway. Her only chance would be to overhear him spouting to me, which if she's discreet she may occasionally be able to do."

"Oh, indeed!" said Miss Jinny subsiding. "Well, that's another matter. I don't object to that."

"Hope not," retorted Bruce amiably. "Now as to Elinor." He stopped for so many rings that Judith stirred and cleared her throat impatiently, whereon he grinned

cheerfully at her and went on. "As to Elinor. She will keep on with the night life, but the rest of her time will be spent in the studio here, working on studies and cartoons for a big wall decoration for a church, and a stained glass window for the same church—a purely mythical one, my dear Dragon, but intended to develop our promising student more rapidly than the easygoing method of the schools. What do you say to the program, young ladies?"

Patricia smiled at Elinor's fervid response and Judith's calm approval, but she uttered never a word, though Bruce looked at her inquiringly.

"Well?" he said at last. "What's the verdict?"

"I think it is simply great," replied Patricia with a ripple of mirth. "I honestly do, Bruce. I'm going to have a gorgeous time, and I'm awfully grateful to you for it."

"Well?" he repeated. "That's not all you're thinking, Miss Pat. You're simpering at some hidden invention of your

own, and you know it. Out with it or we'll put the X-rays on it."

Patricia flung a look at Miss Jinny. "Really and truly I haven't any secret to confess, Bruce. I was only thinking how very nice it was for us, Judy and me, that we had such a genius for a sister."

Miss Jinny's eyes twinkled, but Bruce flushed and flicked his cigar ash into the fire with a dexterous finger.

"What has that to do with your meek and lowly gratitude?" he asked with the trace of a smile.

"It has everything to do with all of us," responded Patricia promptly. "We're just the tail of the comet, you know."

Bruce opened his eyes and sat up, piercing Patricia with a keen gaze. Evidently he found no reserve behind her words, for he broke into a laugh and shook his head at her.

"I'm in a regular nest of female detectives," he retaliated gayly. "Between you and Judy I shan't have a single secret left at the end of the month. I'll have to watch myself like thunder, Miss Jinny, or they'll

make a miserable hen-pecked man of me!"

Miss Jinny grunted amiably at him, and then rose. "I guess you know what you're about, Bruce Haydon. Don't look to me to protect you, though, for I'm a mighty active *feminist*, and I can't waste any of my valuable time taking care of such a common critter as a man." With a nod to the girls, she beckoned her mother.

"Time for bed, mama dear," she said clearly. "I've got your ginger tea ready for you, and I guess it's the last you'll want this year." In a lower tone she explained to the others: "Just brewed it to make her feel more at home, you know. She doesn't need it in this fiery furnace of a place."

Mrs. Shelly, with a kindly good-night to Bruce, trotted after them, fumbling with her watch pocket.

"I declare, if it isn't half-past ten!" she exclaimed, as she snapped the blue enameled lid of her little watch. "My little girl ought to have been in bed an hour ago."

Judith twined her arms about her and kissed her fondly.

"It doesn't matter just for tonight, does it, Mama Shelly?" she asked with pretty deference. "There are going to be such a lot of nights to go to bed early in."

Mrs. Shelly nodded briskly. "And I'll come sit with you while you're getting ready," she promised, patting Judith's hand. "We can have some good talks together then, and I'll remember more stories for you, too."

Much to Judith's delight she kissed them all around, and then she hustled off after Miss Jinny, leaving them to themselves in the big, comfortable room.

Patricia flung herself on the fur rug that lay before the empty fireplace.

"I don't feel as if I'd ever want to go to sleep," she said rapturously. "It seems like a glorious dream that we're going to live in this romantic place a whole month. Bruce is a perfect duck to fix it up so we can all be together. I shan't study much here, I feel that in my bones, but I'll have a gorgeous time. How do you feel about it, Judy?"

Judith sat with one stocking in her hand, dreaming, and she awoke with a start.

"I'm going to *write!*" she declared, dramatically waving the stocking about. "This is truly inspiring!"

Patricia gave a short laugh. "Did it ever occur to you that our little Judy might make a fair actress, Norn?" she asked, deftly catching the bare foot that supported Judith and bringing her down on the rug beside her. "Her passion for the limelight grows, I notice, and recent events have not tended to make her unmindful of her merits."

"Oh, stop teasing, Miss Pat," cried Judith, wriggling free. "I wouldn't be an actress if you'd hire me. I'm going to be a writer, and now I'm going to bed. Good-night," and she made a flying leap into her pillows and covered herself to the eyes. "Don't say another word to me tonight," she warned, "or I'll call Miss Jinny. I'm going to sleep."

Patricia yawned and rose. "I guess I'll follow her virtuous example. I'm really

getting awfully drowsy, now it's so quiet," she confessed.

Elinor was already half asleep when Patricia suddenly sat up with a mirthful gurgle.

"What fun it'll be to tell the gang at the Academy," she crowed. "Won't Griffin rejoice and won't Doris Leighton wish she'd been good! Margaret Howes will have a chance to meet Bruce, too. It'll be a perfect lark all around!"

Elinor sighed in deep content.

"Maybe Bruce will let Margaret work with me sometimes," she murmured joyfully. "I know he's going to like Griffin tremendously; she's just the sort to fit in with us all. Miss Jinny's crazy over her. I don't believe we'll see poor Doris Leighton again. Griffin told me she was leaving."

Patricia cuddled down in the pillows again, with a chuckle.

"Miss Jinny told me that Mr. Spicer had asked us all to tea at the Science and Arts Club," she said. "The Haldens are coming in for Easter and all the other holidays, and we're going to simply revel in delight-

ful doings right here in the studio. It's a dream of goodly revelry, Norn, isn't it?"

"It means more than that to me," replied Elinor. "It means work—glorious, big, beautiful work——"

"Do you know," interrupted Patricia, suddenly alert again, "I don't believe I'll ever amount to a row of pins as an artist? I always forget the work and think only of the *people* and the fun. I wonder if I can't brace up and do something worth while. I'll start in tomorrow—see if I don't."

CHAPTER XV

AFTERNOON TEA

THE days slipped by with wonderful swiftness after the trunks had been unpacked and things had settled down to the regular routine. Patricia wondered at the evenness of their minds and the serenity of their hearts in those first three weeks of studio life.

"Everything goes so smoothly," she confided to Miss Jinny one day at the end of the fortnight. "It sounds monotonous, but I don't mean it that way at all. We're all so *naturally* polite and agreeable. We don't seem to have to force ourselves a bit."

"That's because we've each of us got something to do," declared Miss Jinny emphatically. "If we were idling around, musing on ourselves from morning till night like some poor creatures do, we'd get prickly mighty soon. People were

made to work, and it's flying in the face of Providence to try to get away from it. We all got our share in the curse of Adam, and the sooner we realize it, the better for us."

Patricia played with the handle of the great glittering brass amphora that stood by the low stool where she sat. Her face was puzzled though not disquiet.

"I wonder just what my work will turn out to be?" she said thoughtfully. "I'm beginning to be afraid I haven't any real work of my own. I've tried so hard to get on with the modeling—for I do love it—but it just seems as though I couldn't. That first head that they liked so much, and the study of Ju is about all the sculpture I've got in my system, I reckon. I'm downright ashamed to let them know——"

"You needn't be," declared Miss Jinny vigorously. "You never pretended you were in it for anything but sport, did you? Bruce knows you're about through with it; I heard him say so to Elinor yesterday."

"Oh, did he though?" cried Patricia, kindling. "How clever of him to see. I thought no one *dreamed!*"

Miss Jinny chuckled. "We knew you were only marking time till you stepped off into your music," she said encouragingly. "It was nice, of course, that you got along so well, but no one expected you to take to it for good and all."

Patricia sighed contentedly. "How nice you all are!" she said appreciatively. "I thought you'd all be disgusted with me if I quit. After Mr. Grantly said that study of Ju showed promise, I nearly wore myself to a bone trying to make good. I've been scared stiff about it."

"Don't you worry, Miss Pat. You'll find your own work all in good time. It mayn't be what you'd like it to, but it'll be something that you can do better than any one else," said Miss Jinny with kind wisdom. "Look at me. I'm sure that books and catalogues is my forte, but the Lord knows better. He's given me the sense to see it, too, and so mama is comfortable and happy and someone else who hasn't a dear mother depending on her does the library work in my place."

"You're a darling," said Patricia, "and the Lord must be terribly fond of you."

"Patricia Louise Kendall! That's sacrilege!" gasped the scandalized Miss Jinny.

"Is it?" exclaimed Patricia, equally startled. "I didn't know it was. Mr. Spicer said it himself yesterday when he was talking to me in the print room, and I was telling him about your poor basket and saving bank, and all that. I'm awfully sorry, Miss Jinny."

Miss Jinny had a queer look, Patricia thought, as she turned hurriedly away with a murmured excuse about the tea table.

"Why, it's all ready," cried Patricia wondering at her changed manner. "We put the sliced lemon on the very last thing."

But Miss Jinny was not to be diverted into talk again, and as she started out of the studio the bell came to her aid, buzzing shrilly an insistent summons to the door.

"That's Griffin; I know her ring!" cried Patricia jumping up. "I'll go."

Griffin it was, in the highest good humor and bursting with news. She did not wait to get out of her coat before she began to

unbosom herself to them both, alternately addressing each in turn.

"Kendall Major's missed it, I tell you, going off to that poky architectural show," she declared to Miss Jinny. "We had the time of our lives today in life class. Benton's up in the air because Howes showed him that Ascension study she did over here—you know he never could bear Haydon or his work—and he was as mad as hops that he should be butting in with any of his own special pets like Howes."

"How mean!" cried Patricia spiritedly. "Bruce hasn't even seen that study. What did he say about it?"

"Oh, he couldn't *say* anything right out," replied Griffin knowingly, "but he made it hot for us, I tell you. Poor old Bottle Green caught it first, for painting before he'd given her permission, and then he jumped on me for not painting. Radford caught it and then he lit on Slovinski for using the Whistler palette, and she just *blew up!* These Poles aren't like us tame tabbies, you know, and she's full of ginger, for all her sleepy ways. She's terribly high-born,

you know, and can't bear anyone to look cross-eyed at her."

"What did she do?" asked Patricia eagerly.

"Slammed him good and hard," returned Griffin succinctly. "Told him he was fifteen different sorts of a lobster."

"Oh, do talk English, Griffie dear," begged Patricia, laughing. "Miss Jinny doesn't understand your Choctaw speech."

"Well then, she rebuked him thoroughly for his variable though severe criticisms, and stated, with some emotion, that the Board should be enlightened as to his unfitness, through his captious temper, for the delicate task of nourishing the tender sensibilities of the budding artist."

"My word, she wasn't shy, was she?" interpolated Patricia, much diverted.

"Not she," declared Griffin. "We were all in a blue fit. Not that we old stagers are sorry for the man, but it shocked our sense of what's due him as a teacher. I was fearfully ashamed of Slovinski, but it *was* fun to see how astounded he looked. He just stood looking at her more quietly than

I'd ever seen him look at any one, and then he bowed and asked her if she'd quite finished. Jiminy, but he was polite! We all got a chill. Slovinski sat down, and we took to work again. Benton went on criticizing as if nothing had happened, but we felt mighty queer. Then Bottle Green stooped over to get her paint-box, and up she starts, most tragic-like, with her hand on her shoulder, and she solemnly announces she's broken her arm."

"Poor thing, she's done it at last!" cried Patricia compassionately. "Then what happened?"

"She got safely off, and then the model began to look queer, and in a minute she'd fainted. Howes brought her to with a glass of mineral water, and the class broke up. But the model didn't go. After Benton had made a small spicy speech of farewell—he's leaving, can't stand being sassed—she got up on the stand and gave us a bunch of monologues that were out of sight. She used to be on the variety stage until she lost her voice. I tell you, Kendall missed it."

"What did I miss?" called Elinor's voice from the other room, where she had come in unnoticed.

She came to the doorway with her hat and furs still on and repeated the question. Griffin gave her a synopsis of the row and the casualties following, which she received with a little protesting laugh.

"I can't say it sounds better than the architectural show," she said, pulling out her hat-pins.

"That part wasn't," agreed Griffin, "though a bit more sporting perhaps. But what came after was. Mary Miller, the model, told us the most wonderful story—her own life, first in the bush in Australia and then here in New York and Chicago; and who do you think she is?"

"Melba in disguise?" mocked Elinor gayly.

"Stuff!" snorted Griffin, impatiently. "Her family comes from Rockham, and her grandmother used to live at Greycroft. She's going out to see the place when it gets warmer. I didn't tell her you lived

there now, for I didn't know whether you'd want——"

"Lands to goodness, I believe I've seen her!" exclaimed Miss Jinny. "There was a Mary Miller, a little thing about five, used to play about the place when old Miss Spence lived there. Her mother married again and went to Australia. Must be the same one."

"Come over to the shop tomorrow and see if it isn't—" Griffin began, when there was a sound of laughter and talking in the outer hall and the door opened to admit Bruce, Margaret Howes, the two Halden girls and Judith.

Mr. Spicer and Mrs. Shelly came in almost at the same time, and Miss Jinny's delicious tea and nut-cakes were served with great gayety and lively chatter. The Haldens, having come from a two-days vacation at Rockham, were full of neighborhood gossip and gave very circumstantial accounts of Greycroft, Hannah Ann and Henry.

"We saw Hannah Ann and Henry on Saturday and got all the news about the

place from them. Major had the colic one night, but Hannah Ann saved him with a quart of homeopathic pills," laughed Miriam. "Everything looked just as natural as life when we drove by this morning. They'll be mighty glad to see you all when you go back."

"What are you putting up in the garden, Elinor?" asked Madalon, stirring her tea. "I noticed that Henry had a lot of poles planted along the south shrubbery——"

Judith's dismayed exclamation cut short her account of the activities at Greycroft.

"Now you've done it!" cried Judith in distress. "She knows all about it, and I meant it for a surprise! Oh dear!"

"I'm awfully sorry—" began Madalon, contritely, but Judith was too deeply disappointed to be very polite.

"Hannah Ann and I have been writing about it for ever so long," she lamented, "and we were having it put just where you wanted it, Elinor, and Henry got the trees from the wood lot, and we were going to have it for a surprise—" She broke off, choking.

Elinor slipped an arm about her. "But what is it, Ju dear?"

"A pup-pup-pergola," spluttered Judith, recovering a bit. "Just the sort you wanted. And we planned for Miss Pat to make one of those lovely stone seats out of concrete. But it isn't any use, now," she ended forlornly.

"Don't be a muff," said Patricia briskly. "It's twice as good, don't you see, coming out this way? Here are eight people surprised all in a bunch, instead of merely Elinor and poor me. You've sprung it in the very nick of time, Infant."

"Sure thing," supplemented Griffin genially. "I'm in it now, and if you'd put it off, I'd been in Kalamazoo or Madagascar, and missed it all."

Judith with this encouragement began to take heart, and by the time Mr. Spicer and Margaret Howes had joined their congratulations to the others, she was fully recovered and enjoying herself immensely, arguing with Margaret Howes and Bruce as to the shape of the projected seat with a freedom that was usually denied her.

The subject of Mary Miller was brought up and discussed with great interest. Everyone advocated Miss Jinny's visit to the Academy, and Judith added the hope that the descendant of the old housekeeper at Greycroft might be able to throw some light on the disappearance of the old miser's silver and bank books, a remark that caused some consternation among the elder members of the party.

"Don't you go making suggestions of that sort," warned Bruce, with impressive authority. "The girl will feel as though her great-grandmother were a thief."

"Oh, I wouldn't put it that way," cried Judith, scandalized. "I'd just sort of hint around gently. Maybe they dug it up long ago."

"Ju's got the idea from her last thriller that the Dutchman who used to live at Greycroft buried his treasure somewhere about the place," explained Patricia to Griffin. "I suppose she'll spend her time grubbing this summer."

Griffin pushed up her blouse sleeve, showing a remarkably thin arm. "I'm

your man, if you ever want a pal," she said to Judith. "I'm trained down to the right weight now and ready for business."

Judith did not know whether she was being chaffed or not, so she dexterously changed the subject.

"Doris Leighton's sister has the scarlet fever," she announced, enjoying the stir that the name caused, "and Doris is nursing her. She takes turns with the nurse, and Geraldine cries when she goes out of the room."

"Phew, that doesn't sound like our fine lady of the stony heart!" exclaimed Griffin. "Are you sure, kidlet?"

Judith nodded emphatically. "Mrs. Leighton told Miss Hillis over the phone, and she told the class, as 'an example of sisterly devotion,' she called it. I felt like telling her *what I knew*."

"Judith Kendall, you're a little monster!" cried Patricia, indignantly. "Even if Doris did cheat, she's doing a noble thing now, and we ought to be the last to blab, since Elinor got the prize. Doris had to pay for her sins and she has human feelings, too."

"Pooh, she didn't have to pay much," said Judith with the callousness of childhood. "She only gave back the prize and left the Academy."

"I'm glad to hear that she is making good now," said Margaret Howes gravely. "I always felt there was a lot of good in Leighton under her fluff."

"Perhaps it took hard rubs to bring it out," said Miss Jinny, pouring another cup for Mr. Spicer. "We poor human critters are like that sometimes. Good times spoil us. Maybe she's had it too easy, poor girl."

"Souls have muscles, the same as bodies do, and they need exercise," agreed Bruce thoughtfully. "I know lots of fellows who are failures through having too much money. It's a dangerous thing to let your soul get seedy."

"Golly, that pretty nearly hits us all, doesn't it?" said Griffin apprehensively. "I'm not so sure about myself, now you mention it. Doris Leighton may be one ahead of me in this business. Fatty degeneration of the soul is a new one to me."

They were all rather serious for a silent moment, and then Patricia spoke. Her clear voice was rather low and timid, but her eyes were shining.

"Let's phone to her and tell her that we all hope Geraldine will soon be well," she said, looking at Elinor with loving confidence.

There was a murmur of assent and Elinor rose quickly.

"The very thing, Miss Pat," she agreed radiantly. "I'll look up the number for you."

But Patricia shrank from appearing too magnanimous.

"It's your affair, Norn," she demurred. "You ought to do the talking."

So Elinor went into the sitting-room where the telephone was, and in the intervals of their rather forced conversation, they could hear scraps of her kind questions and gentle answers. When she returned to the studio, her face was glowing.

"I'm so glad you thought of phoning, Miss Pat," she said, taking her plate and cup from Bruce and seating herself by Miss

Jinny. "Doris was—well, I can't tell you what she said, but she certainly isn't as bad as we thought her. She's just wrapped up in Geraldine and she seems to think that this illness is a judgment on her for the prize study."

"Poor thing," exclaimed Griffin. "Did you tell her we all asked for her?"

Elinor nodded. "She said I might as well tell you all, for it would be in the papers tomorrow. Her father has failed, and they're dreadfully poor. It's been coming on for a long while, and that was why she wanted the prize so much—not that she excused herself for it, she only said I could see how she came to stoop so low. She was frantic for the money and was so worried that she couldn't think of any subject for herself. She thought I was rich and happy and wouldn't care. She even thought I might not turn in my study at all, when I got sick that night. She's had a terrible time about it, but she was *so* glad to have the chance to explain."

"Why in the world didn't she say so before?" cried Griffin indignantly. "She

had a chance to defend herself. We're not absolutely inhuman."

"She couldn't, don't you see, without telling her father's private affairs?" said Elinor gently. "She didn't feel that it was any excuse for her conduct, anyway."

Patricia heaved a deep sigh. "Well, I must say," she said with a triumphant look at Miss Jinny, "I do believe in first impressions and I'm glad I always liked Doris Leighton."

Miriam Halden rose regretfully. "Sorry to break up the festivities, Miss Jinny," she said, shaking hands, "but our train leaves in just ten minutes, and Madalon has on bran-new pumps with heels that cut her down to a mile an hour. We'll see you all again next week at the house-breaking, as Judith calls it."

"We'll be here," promised Madalon, following her sister's example. "We'll have to miss lunch and the Senior dance, but what's a mere dance compared to helping a neighbor say farewell to their happy little home. Look for us at twelve-thirty sharp and prepare an extra mess of pottage,

for we'll both be fearfully hungry. Tell David and Tom Hughes we'll come in on the same train they do. Good-bye, be good till Saturday and then we'll all be happy."

CHAPTER XVI

APRIL SHOWERS

"THAT Miller girl needs a good rest," said Miss Jinny emphatically.

She had come in from her visit to the Academy, where she had interviewed the model with a thoroughness that left little of her past unexplored, and her face was sad and thoughtful as she stood pulling off her gloves, finger by finger, by the big side window in the studio.

Mrs. Shelly went on with her knitting, but Patricia, who was mending a long rent in her best blouse, looked up with eager interest.

"Did you have a chance to talk to her much?" she asked, snapping off her thread in her absorption. "What is she really like? Does she remember Rockham? And does she know we have the old place?"

Miss Jinny chuckled and then grew grave and thoughtful.

"I guess she wouldn't last much longer at this business," she said, smoothing the creases out of the glove fingers. "She's got a pinched look and her cheeks are mighty pink. No, it ain't paint; I asked right out, and she answered just as nice as could be. She seems tired, poor girl, and mortally glad to have some one take an interest. She says the class rooms are so hot, and the change from living in eighty degrees to sixty-five, like it is in her room, has made her downright sick part of the time."

"It must be hard on her," acquiesced Patricia. "Why didn't she get something else to do?"

"Couldn't," said Miss Jinny, briefly. "A girl without friends or money hasn't much show in a big town. I'm going to take charge of that girl, Patricia."

Patricia felt a thrill of alarm.

"You aren't going to bring her *here?*" she queried, a faint flush of shame at the selfishness of her speech creeping into her cheeks.

"Certainly *not,*" said Miss Jinny crisply. "I'm merely a guest here. I'm going to do

something more practical, and I want you to help me, if you can stop being jealous of the poor girl, for——"

Patricia flung the sewing aside and threw her arms about her friend in a tempest of contrition. "I didn't mean to be horrid," she cried. "You know I wouldn't really be so selfish—if I thought you wanted it. But we have been so happy together here, and I wanted it to go onto the end, just like a beautiful story that ends happily. I'm sorry I seemed mean."

Miss Jinny gave her a pat and a kiss. "I guess I feel quite as much that way as you do, Miss Pat," she said with unusual softness. "I hadn't the wildest notion of bringing Mary Miller here. I'm going to take her to Rockham with me."

Patricia's heart sank, but she concealed her feelings sufficiently to reassure Miss Jinny, who went on briskly:

"I'm going to take her out with us day after tomorrow—she's not going back to the Academy—and I'm going to get work for her. There's where you can help. She's a good sewer, she says, though she'd

rather live with someone and do housework."

"Shouldn't think she'd be strong enough for housework," said Patricia, puckering her brow. "Mrs. Hand wants a 'lady houseworker,' but I don't believe she'd have an ex-model. She's so awfully particular, you know."

Miss Jinny nodded. "She'd work her to death, anyway," she agreed. "She's mighty inhuman under her soft outside. Her help don't hear much of her purry ways, I can tell you. That's why they're always leaving. No, Mrs. Hand won't do." She sighed in perplexity. "I wish we were well enough off to keep her ourselves. I've taken a liking to her quiet ways, and I'd enjoy having her about, I'm sure. Most country girls are so loud and clumping that I've never wanted help before, but she's mighty different."

Patricia rubbed the end of her nose with the scissors. "There are the Haldens and the Berkleys and Tattans," she mused. "They're all supplied. Perhaps someone will leave and then she can get their place.

Maybe Hannah Ann will have her help sometimes,—we can't afford to have anyone regularly, you know."

Miss Jinny rose abruptly, and putting away her things, began preparations for tea.

"Well, it's settled that she's going with us," she said comfortably. "I guess the future will take care of itself. If we do the best we can and leave the rest to the Lord, we can't go far astray. I feel that Mary Miller is going to be taken care of some way."

It had been raining all the afternoon, a gentle persistent rain that gave no sign of clearing, and they decided, after a cozy dinner at home, that their projected trip to Rockham the next day would have to be given up; but when Bruce pulled aside the curtain from the studio window to compare his watch with the illuminated disc of the St. Francis clock tower, he gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"It's cleared off, after all," he said. "It's going to be a ripping fine day tomorrow."

They crowded to the big window, and

saw, through the wet flicker of tiny sprouting leaves, a wind-swept sky with racing clouds and brilliant stars blazing in the dark, serene spaces between the hurrying masses of billowy vapor.

Judith clapped her hands. "We'll go, won't we, Bruce, and Elinor, and Miss Jinny?" she asked, whirling to each authority in turn. "We'll see dear, delectable Greycroft and have our picnic in the barn?"

"And the pup-pup-pergola, too," added Patricia mischievously.

Miss Jinny meditated for a moment. "I don't believe I'll go," she said. "I'm going back in another day or so, and mama and I will have enough of Rockham anyway. I'll stay with her and finish that library book that Mr. Spicer lent me. It's overdue now, anyway."

So it was arranged that the four of them, Elinor, Patricia, Judith, and Bruce, should take the early train to Rockham and spend the day in adjusting matters at Greycroft for their return the following Saturday, coming back to town in the late afternoon or early evening.

Just as they had finished, to their great satisfaction the studio knocker sounded the quick double knock that always heralded Griffin, and Judith flew to welcome her.

"I didn't ring," she explained, standing on the little blue rug by the umbrella stand, and jabbing her dripping umbrella into the stand. "The hall door was open and I came right in." She hesitated, and then rushed on, directing most of her speech to Elinor. "Geraldine Leighton is dying, they say, and I thought we might each send a little note to Doris—she's awfully alone, now that Mrs. Leighton is ill, you know. It mightn't help her much, but it would show her that we——"

"Dying!" cried Patricia, aghast. "Why they said she was better this morning."

Judith crept near to Mrs. Shelly and caught her hand close in both of hers. The others put eager questions. Griffin, who was deeply stirred, answered breathlessly. Suddenly, in the midst of the quiet, homelike, cozy evening, had come tragedy and the shadow of death.

Patricia had known Geraldine Leighton

in a very slight and casual way, but with the word "dying," she became the heroic center of her hurrying thoughts. She saw her in the dim room with Doris and the nurse and doctor, each agonizingly intent on the slow, faltering heart-beats and the fitful, irregular breathing. As her swift mind galloped on to the end, and the subdued sounds of grief caught her inner ear, another face began to print itself rapidly on that quick-moving scene—Doris, white and haggard, looked into her eyes, and she felt her whole heart go out to her.

Griffin was just ending the sentence that had hurried the fleeting pictures through her mind when Patricia slipped away unnoticed into the hall, where she flung on a cape and soft hat of Judith's and softly let herself out.

The Leighton house was a big dark pile at the end of the street and the only light visible was in the back room where Patricia knew the struggle against death and disease was being fought out. She paused for a long look and then she ran lightly up the steps and put a shrinking finger on the bell.

It seemed an eternity till the door was grudgingly opened and a white-faced, gruff boy asked unrecognizingly what she wanted.

Patricia put her questions tremblingly, for she feared the stern, strange face of the boy in knickerbockers. She had seen him playing and shouting in the square on other days, and the change was so great that she felt death alone could have wrought it. But he answered evenly that 'Geraldine was just the same,' and was closing the door when Patricia stopped him. After a hasty parley, on his part, at first stubborn and then yielding, the door closed and Patricia, with beating heart, ran down the steps and hurried to the side of the house where the long windows of the drawing room protruded their iron balconies over the sidewalk.

Here she waited in the shadow of the fluttering violet arc light, with her eyes fastened to the silent, insensible windows. Ten minutes that seemed ten eternities went lagging by. Tears of disappointment rose to Patricia's eyes and she shivered as the gusts of west wind flung the drops

from the saturated trees in a silver shower across the darkened panes.

"I'll count ten, and then I'll go," she said to herself.

The windows remained dark, and the only sounds on the quiet side street were the wind in the wet trees and the sizzle of the arc light above her head.

"Five, six, sev——"

She sprang forward as the second window slowly moved and a muffled figure stood on the balcony.

"Oh, Doris!" was all she found to say, as she stretched eager hands toward her.

Doris shrank back with a low, horrified cry.

"Don't come near me!" she warned in a stifled voice. "Go back as far as the tree. Don't you know it's scarlet fever? I'll go in at once if you come nearer."

Patricia retreated to the tree, and Doris stood with one hand clutching the cloak and the light strong on her face. She looked more beautiful than ever to Patricia's friendly eyes, and there was a calm strength in her manner that awed

while it comforted her. All consciousness of herself was gone, and, Patricia felt, gone forever, and in its place a quiet courage that spoke of conquered pride and vanity and selfishness. Doris Leighton had found herself.

In the hurried words that they exchanged there was a more solid welding of their renewed friendship than the telephone could have accomplished for them in many interviews, and they parted at the end of the allotted five minutes, each with a growing faith in the mercies of that Providence which had led them to a nobler comradeship.

Patricia, promising to give Doris' messages to Elinor and the rest, hurried off, leaving the drawing-room windows once more blank and impassive. She ran into the studio as Griffin was rising to go, with her umbrella, reclaimed from the stand, still dripping slow occasional drops unheeded on the polished floor.

They had not missed her, much to her surprise. She felt she had undergone so much, and they were still in the very state she had left them. She blurted out her

triumphant account of the new Doris, almost forgetting Geraldine, and to their excited questionings and comments she flashed illuminating replies, making them see the very figure in the muffled cloak with the courageous expression on its lovely face.

There was generous and general rejoicing at her account of the brief interview, and a strong feeling that under this happier augury Geraldine must recover. Patricia went to bed feeling that the storm of the afternoon had been a type of her own day, and that for her the stars were serenely shining after the tempest of doubt and estrangement.

"Geraldine won't die," she said fervently to Elinor as she put out the light. "I *know* she won't die."

And the morning proved her prophecy, for at the first inquiry came the joyful news that the crisis was past and Geraldine already improving.

"Now we can go on our spree with clear minds," said Judith, as they sat down to breakfast in the sunny sitting-room. "It's

a perfect day and Rockham will look too sweet for anything."

"What a beautiful description of a spring day in the country by a budding literary light," commented Patricia merrily. "I'm afraid your style is rather going off, Ju! You haven't been consulting that dictionary of yours recently."

Judith merely shrugged and went on with her breakfast, while Bruce and Elinor, who had been up unusually early and were already equipped, discussed Elinor's finished wall-decoration which stood at the far end of the studio, just visible from the breakfast table. Bruce was much elated over the progress of his pupil, and prophesied great things for Elinor in time. He even went so far as to promise that the stained glass window for which she had made a cartoon should be executed and put in the little Rockham church.

Altogether they were in a happy frame of mind and life seemed very satisfactory to them. As they left the town behind and the dimpling, downy, spring-time country rolled out beyond their flying windows, they

became positively hilarious, intoxicated by sunshine and spring. They found Greycroft, Hannah Ann and Henry all equally admirable. The pergola was inspected and found well-composed and attractive, and the site for Patricia's concrete seat was decided on hopefully. The picnic luncheon in the big barn, which Hannah Ann served with great delight while Henry hurried back and forth to the house with warm dishes and reinforcements of delicious food, was a glorious frolic, and even the big black clouds that swept suddenly over the luminous sky did not distress them.

"Let's stay here for a minute or two, and then run up to the house before it comes," suggested Patricia, with her chin on the half door of the barn, looking out over the tender landscape and down at the flowers in the unused barnyard far below.

Hannah Ann and Henry had disappeared with the remains of the feast and the four were alone in the big solid structure, with hay mows on either side of their banqueting floor and a smell of dry, sweet herbage in the air.

Bruce scanned the rushing yellow clouds.

"Better shut the windows there, Miss Pat," he said. "I'll close the doors and then we'll hustle. It's going to be a stunner when it comes."

Patricia had barely clicked the bolts in the glass upper doors and heard the heavy clash of the wooden contact as Bruce slid the great leaves of the big door into place, when with a swish and sweep the storm broke.

"We can't go now," cried Patricia, throwing her voice above the sound of the wind, but Bruce and Elinor at the other end of the barn were apparently absorbed in the spectacle, and did not hear her. Judith cuddled close and Patricia felt her hands go cold, but she could only clasp them harder to reassure her—no words could reach her ear.

The wind, driving furiously from the west, flung the clouds before it—great sullen masses of flying gray vapor that now broke into drenching torrents, shaking the barn and tearing at the casements. In a moment the place was dark with its roar

and the rumble of coming fury undertoned the shrill screams of the greedy tempest wind.

Patricia held Judith close, with her own heart beating tumultuously to the rhythm of the storm. Hard rattling drops castinetted at the glass, beating an accompaniment to the roar of the racing clouds. For a moment all was black, then, as the whirling cloud masses swept apart, the pelting drops lulled and a gray twilight full of ominous murmurs filled the place. Before Patricia could frame the swift thought that the storm was passing, darkness swept over them again, and the fierce scream of the relentless wind tore at the corners of the barn. The rain beat, deluged, engulfed the out-of-doors; it drummed gayly with diminishing ferocity; then it roared sullenly, flooding the rain spouts to bursting; it raged again, with the scream of the wind growing higher, and snapping branches flung themselves past the gray squares of the windows, flying leaves pasted wet green blurs on the streaming glass. Judith shuddered.

"Oh, Patricia!" she cried in Patricia's ear, but the words died into the tempest.

The sound of running water outside their shelter gradually forced its way into the tumult. The road was a yellow waterway; the brook tore above the limit of its deep banks into a widening saffron river among the green meadows, which showed in the ghastly light in crude and ugly colors.

Then, suddenly as it had come, the storm passed, trailing dark, yellow-gray, ragged clouds in its wake. The light came back and the awed girls at the little window saw below them in the emerald meadows, wide ugly yellow splotches that grew as they looked, meeting other growing patches of swirling yellow water from the lanes and roads. Trees showed fresh wounds and masses of broken branches clotted the discolored waters of the brook. Birds called excitedly and flew exultantly about in the limpid air. The sun flung gay greens and golds. The storm was past.

Patricia drew a deep breath.

"Look, look!" cried Judith, her eyes

alight and her whole slender little figure relaxed. "Two trees are down!"

Across the road a huge sycamore blocked the way and on the pike a giant willow had crashed down.

"Oh, Bruce, the sycamore you painted is gone!" called Patricia, not turning. "Come and see!"

Elinor came, with the painter following, and as soon as they saw the work of the storm, Bruce awoke to immediate action.

"You girls tell Henry to come down with the axe and grubbing-hoe," he commanded briskly. "I'm off." And flinging his coat to Elinor, he seized a hatchet that was lying in the stairway and started for the wreckage, while Patricia and Judith flew to fulfill his orders.

The sun shone and the birds sang while the work went on, and far down the pike they could see other prone trees with busy choppers clearing limbs and entangling foliage from the highway. A band of men begirt with axes, cords and other implements passed on their way to the school house where a big maple blocked the pike.

Patricia was tremendously interested and it was with the greatest regret that she heard the whistle of the up-train, while the tangle of the sycamore was still undisturbed in the roadway.

"Oh, do let's stay till it's all done," she urged, but Bruce and Elinor were adamant.

"What does it matter if we do miss the train?" she insisted. "We can take the early one in the morning. We'll be home almost as soon."

"I've got to pack tonight, young lady," Bruce reminded her. "I'm not so fortunate as to be coming to Greycroft, you'll remember. It takes longer to get to Chicago than to Rockham."

"Oh, that's so," acquiesced Patricia. "I suppose you do have to be there for that private view of the panels."

"And a fresh suit is advisable, too," added Bruce. "I don't want my duds to come a week later, as they did in Milwaukee. I'll make sure this time."

"All right," said Patricia, amiably. "We've had a glorious day anyway, and we'll soon be back here for keeps. I

guess I'm not pig enough to grumble. Come on, Judy, we've got to go see Hannah Ann's new hat before we go. I wish she'd left us get it for her. I'm sure it's a fright."

Judith followed sedately with her head in the air.

"I'm going to ask Elinor if Hannah Ann and Henry can't come in town Saturday for the 'housebreaking,'" she said to Patricia as they climbed the stairs. "I think it would be very nice for them to see all our friends. They're such *urbane dependents.*"

CHAPTER XVII

FAREWELL TO THE STUDIO

"DID you see the Haldens on the train, Frad?" asked Patricia as she and David were talking aside by the studio window while Elinor was welcoming Tom Hughes and Griffin, Margaret Howes and Mr. Spicer, who had all arrived in a bunch, Tom having lagged behind to get a big sheaf of roses for Elinor, whom he admired immensely.

"No, we looked for them high and low, but didn't see hide nor hair of them," he answered, ruffing his hair in a way that distressed Patricia, who was very proud of his straight, shining locks.

"I wonder what keeps them?" she said anxiously. "They'd surely phone if they were detained or weren't coming. All of Bruce's friends are here, and Hannah Ann is on pins and needles for fear we'll be delayed and not get through in time for

the four-forty. She was awfully glad to see you, wasn't she?"

"Yep," replied David, grinning. "I was afraid she'd regard me as an interloper in the family abode, but she gave me the glad hand in great shape. I didn't think it was in her to be so hearty. She's taken me in, all right."

"She had your room all fixed with the best covers, but Elinor persuaded her to reconsider it," smiled Patricia. "You're going to be as much at home as any of us, Frad dear, and I'm glad the time will soon be here for your school to shut up and let you come H-O-M-E, *home*."

The clock on St. Francis' tower boomed the hour.

"I think we'll have to begin with the feeding," said Bruce, as Miss Jinny and Mrs. Shelly, gorgeous in their very best raiment, entered from their bedroom. "Madam, may I have the privilege of escorting you to the head of the table?"

Mrs. Shelly made him a pretty little bow.

"I shall be delighted, Mr. Haydon,"

she said primly, to the great gratification of Judith, who had previously arranged this incident.

Elinor followed with Mr. Grantly, and Miss Jinny came next with Mr. Spicer, who was very ceremonial and splendid in new clothes of the latest pattern. Patricia thought he looked particularly radiant, and wondered how he could be so glad to say good-bye. She was about to whisper to Tom Hughes, who was next in the merry jumble that followed the first three precise couples, when there was a tremendous rapping at the studio door, and Hannah Ann in her treasured new hat rushed from Miss Jinny's room, where she had been in ambush, to the besieged portal.

Patricia, Hannah Ann, and the Haldens met on the blue rug, and Patricia was the first to find her voice.

"Well, of all people in the world!" she cried delightedly to the new-comers. "Where *did* you come from? Why aren't you in Paris? And where's Mr. Bingham?"

A tall, good-looking man in tweeds was shaking hands heartily with Hannah Ann,

while an esthetically dressed, rather languid young lady in pastel green was trying to introduce a pretty, smiling blond girl in black furs whom Patricia easily recognized as the original of the photograph that had stood on Mr. Lindley's desk at Greycroft, and the Haldens were explaining how they heard that the Lindleys were in town and so had come in on an earlier train specially to capture them for the house-breaking.

Patricia bubbled with enjoyment of the surprise. She kissed Mrs. Bingham and Mrs. Lindley, too, though she had never laid eyes on her before, and she came near kissing the tall Mr. Lindley, much to the edification of the others who had rushed from the sitting-room at the sound of the outcry.

Griffin and other intimates were introduced to the late Miss Auborn and the professor, both of whom had starred as boarders in the past summer at Greycroft when, at Judith's suggestion, the three girls had tried to retrieve their broken fortunes by means of "paying guests."

"Mr. Bingham will be along presently," said the late Miss Auborn with great com-

posure, arranging her draperies with a careful hand. She was looking remarkably smart and it was evident that the amiable Mr. Bingham had totally eclipsed Art for her. "We only met the Lindleys by chance and Ferdinand had some business to transact that could not wait."

Patricia studied her with eager interest. The bride of half a year was still a bride to her, and the transformation of the limp, bedraggled art student into this languid, elegant young lady was an affair that had its beginnings at Greycroft, for it was under that hospitable roof that Mr. Bingham had first seen Miss Auborn. In the merry Babel of the studio party Mrs. Bingham held her own with a calm assurance that Miss Auborn had not possessed, and when Mr. Bingham, pink and smiling as ever and just a bit more bald, joined them, the air of mild authority with which she welcomed that gentleman impressed Patricia even more strongly.

As they went back to the flower-decked sitting-room, Judith edged close to whisper in her ear.

"I think Miss Jinny has hurt her hand, Miss Pat," she said with exaggerated anxiety. "She's got her handkerchief wrapped about it. I hope it isn't badly hurt—she doesn't look as if it were *inimical*, does she?"

Patricia made a gesture of amused impatience. "You monkey, you aren't thinking of Miss Jinny's hand at all. Where did you get that stuffy word?"

"It isn't stuffy," defended Judith with a flash. "It's a nice, crackling word, and I got it from Arnold Bennet, if you want to know. He uses it all the time. And I've got another, too—'inept'—and that's what you are now, Patricia Kendall. I'm ashamed of your extreme indifference to the beauties of your own language."

Patricia halted by the chair at a side table where her name card lay. Her eyes were fastened on Judith with a peculiarly penetrating gaze, and her firm grasp detained the arm that would have escaped.

"Judith, my child, there's something up, and you'd better confess at once," she said gravely. "No one will hear you now while

we're getting our places. What is it you're plotting?"

Judith wriggled from her with an expression of injured innocence that almost satisfied her.

"I'm not going to do anything, Miss Pat," she declared with emphasis. "You can ask Bruce if I'm 'up to' anything, as you call it."

Patricia reluctantly released her and she slipped away to her own table with Madalon Halden, Tom Hughes, and little Jack Grantly, a nephew of the sculptor, who had been invited specially for Judith's sake, and who was promptly set down by that discriminating young person as being much too young for the high post of companion to her.

Miriam Halden, Mr. Hilton, Griffin, Margaret Howes, Herbert Lester and David —officially known as Francis Edward, but particularly recognized by his twin as Frad —all sat at the same rose-decked table with Patricia, and, as Griffin put it, they made the other tables look "like thirty cents in pennies." The candle light

sparkled on laughing eyes and white teeth, and ripples of merriment enlivened every mouthful of the savory dishes that Dufranne's dignified François, aided by the radiant Henry, served continuously.

Patricia felt sorry for Elinor and Bruce that they should be marooned among the elder and more serious members of the party, but, as David pointed out to her in an answering whisper, they seemed uncommonly satisfied where they were and not at all in need of sympathy.

"We're going to see the decoration—the one Elinor made for the church, you know," said Patricia to Miriam as they left the festive, disheveled sitting-room to the rejuvenating hands of Hannah Ann and Henry, and went with the chatting crowd into the big studio again. "Bruce wouldn't have the luncheon in here because we couldn't get a good view of it if the place was cluttered up with tables and things. He's fearfully proud of it. He says it's as good as lots of regular artists could do."

"She hasn't been studying long, has she?" asked Miriam, with her eyes intent on the

long blue curtain that screened the decoration from sight.

"Just last summer with Miss Auborn and Bruce, and then three months at the Academy and with Bruce again," replied Patricia proudly. "Bruce wouldn't let her stay at the Academy all the time. He thinks it's best to work like the old masters used to, in the studio of some artist, doing things right away. He didn't want Elinor's originality to get barnacles, he said."

Bruce stepped to the space that had been with difficulty kept at the west side of the studio, and stood before them with his hand raised.

"We asked you today to help us break up housekeeping," he said with his winning smile; "but I must confess that I for one have deceived you. I planned to get you all here for a totally different purpose, and I trust you will approve of my craftiness when you have seen what I have to show you."

"Sure we will," interposed Tom Hughes in an unexpectedly audible stage whisper, which greatly confused him, but delighted Patricia and David.

"You all know," Bruce went on, "that I have been trying an experiment of my favorite theory of art education, but very few of you know how it has progressed. And it is to show you the result that I have lured you here today—to crow over some of you, in fact. The canvas I am going to show you was designed, executed as far as it has gone, entirely by Miss Elinor Kendall, a student of hardly more than nine months' study. The subject is the 'Nativity' and it is designed for a chancel in a small church."

As the curtain was drawn from the long canvas Patricia's eyes were on the faces of those in whose impressions she was most interested, and they gave her great satisfaction. Mrs. Bingham's eyes were wide and startled as those of the small hen who discovers that her ungainly child is really a white swan.

"She won't be patronizing Elinor after this," thought Patricia with a chuckle. "And Mr. Grantly has to swallow himself, too. He'll hate to have to eat humble pie to Bruce after all his din against Bruce's

way of thinking. But they all like it, Mr. Lindley and the Halls and Mr. Spicer, too. Dear old Norn, how proud I am of you!"

Judith nudged her sharply. "Miss Jinny's got her hand unwrapped and it's *a ring!*" she hissed.

But Patricia was too much absorbed to heed.

"Hush!" she cautioned, slipping an absent hand into Judith's quivering palm. "Bruce is talking. Oh, isn't he *dear*, to say nice things of each of us. It's like commencement time, Ju, isn't it? All the good little girls get prizes, but I wish he wouldn't go back to that honorable mention of mine. I feel like an impostor."

"Well, you needn't," expostulated Judith sagely. "You got it, didn't you?"

"Y—yes," responded Patricia dubiously. "But I'll never be an artist. I sort of felt that long ago, but now I'm dead certain of it, and it seems like a sham to haul out that effort in the face of Elinor's splendid work."

"I don't feel that way at all—" began Judith, but their murmured comments halted at Bruce's next words.

"And I am glad to tell you that the youngest of our promising students has also made good in her own department," he said, with a smile at the corner where Judith reared her head with sudden pride.

"Miss Judith Kent Kendall has just had her first story accepted and printed in *The Girl's Companion.*"

Patricia gasped, and in the moment's silence that fell she gave the promising authoress a little shake.

"So that was what you were up to?" she said. "I knew you had something on your mind, Judy Kendall, you crafty, clever thing. How perfectly glorious to think you're really in print!"

Judith pulled out of her embrace.

"Don't make a show of me, Miss Pat," she commanded reproachfully. "It isn't correct to show that you are so delighted."

She turned to receive the congratulations that crowded on her, and Patricia, with a gay little ripple of amusement, watched the slender childish figure straighten to its utmost height and assume an air of grave affability as Judith responded to her ovation.

"That kid is a born actress," said David in her ear. "Look at her, Miss Pat. Isn't she the picture of an eminent authoress at a club reception?"

Patricia smiled and opened her lips, but the words died away, as Bruce, now with a gayety that bespoke a different sort of announcement, mounted the model stand in the middle of the room, and rapped loudly for attention. Miss Jinny had vainly tried to grab his sleeve as he slipped past her and now stood with an expression of grim martyrdom glaring at Mr. Spicer, who was smiling at her openly and, Patricia thought, heartlessly.

"I have a postscript to add," smiled Bruce. "Sometimes, as you know, the postscript is of great importance."

He paused a moment till the silence was perfect and then he said, with a pretense of reading a notice from a sheet of paper:

"Mrs. Virginia P. Shelly announces the engagement of her daughter Virginia E. to Mr. Nathaniel Spicer, late of the Geological Survey——"

He got no further. Miss Jinny, who had

won first place in the interest of the art community as Sinbad and kept it by her own wholesome goodness, was surrounded and overwhelmed. Patricia was the first to seize her unwilling hand.

"Now I *shall* see how an engaged couple behaves!" she cried triumphantly. "You shan't escape me, mind you, for I'm your very nearest friend, and I'll be your bridesmaid if you'll let me."

Miss Jinny came to herself with a chuckle. "My gracious, Patricia Kendall, what are you thinking of!" she exclaimed in growing amazement. "Are you mad enough to imagine I'm going to behave like a lunatic, just because I'm taking a new name to myself? Do behave or I'll never speak to you again!"

"That's the way to squelch her," laughed Griffin, who was pumping the beaming Mr. Spicer's hand like mad. "She'd be a regular nuisance if you encouraged her. I'll warn Bottle Green——"

"What, you don't mean to say—" interrupted Margaret Howes. "I heard that Jeffries took her to the vaudeville show and

I thought that was a tremendous change of heart for nice old Greenie."

"Yep, she's engaged to Jeffries," announced Griffin with great enjoyment. "Has Elinor heard? Let's go break the news."

Patricia preceded them to the corner where Elinor, rather pale and agitated, was holding back as Bruce tried to lead her to the model stand. Patricia thought that Bruce's insistence had something to do with the decoration, which was half forgotten by most of the company, and she laid a detaining hand on Elinor's other arm.

"What do you want to make a show of her for, Bruce?" she remonstrated feelingly. "You can say all you have to say right here, can't you?"

Then her breath caught in her throat and her heart gave a sudden *flop*, for, as Elinor raised her left hand there was a flash and glitter of gems—a new splendid circle of diamonds scintillated on Elinor's third finger.

"Oh, Norn," she gasped, dropping her hand and searching Elinor's flushing face with questioning eyes. "You too?"

Elinor nodded mutely and clasped Patricia's two hands in her own. Bruce took Patricia's other hand in his strong, warm grasp and the three stood for a silent second as much apart from the gay, noisy scene as though a curtain had dropped between them.

"I'm awfully glad," said Patricia, recovering herself first and beginning to realize the joyfulness of the astounding news. "Let me tell them, will you?"

It was not until all the guests had gone, and David and his friends had taken their reluctant leave with fervid promises of speedy reunion at Greycroft, and the packers had disappeared with the big canvas and the cartoons, and Hannah Ann and Henry had reduced everything to a state of perfection that even the most critical Symons in the world could not cavil at, and Bruce had said his last farewells and was on the blue rug at the studio door with his hand on the knob to usher them out, that Patricia found utterance for her seething thoughts.

"I may be a believer in votes for women,"

she said solemnly, clasping her vanity case so hard that she unconsciously shattered its clasp. "I may be a yellow suffragist, as Judy calls me, but I must say, men can make things mighty comfortable for you."

There was a shout of amazed laughter, but Patricia persisted:

"Look at us last fall before we discovered David; look at us now; look at Miss Jinny; look at Elinor's canvas—which she could'nt have dreamed of doing if Miss Auborn had been chaperoning her! I tell you, men have ways of doing things that hit *the spot*, and I think it's a shame they don't get the credit for it."

Bruce cocked his head mischievously at her.

"Are you going to promulgate that doctrine at the Suffrage League?" he asked, beginning to turn the knob.

"Yes, I am—if I ever go there," returned Patricia with great spirit. "But I shan't have time for a long while. I'm going to raise chickens with Miriam Halden this summer, and I've got to start in right

away with the plans for the houses and yards."

Bruce flung the door wide.

"Well, we're turning another page of our lives," he said with a backward glance at the rooms where they had been so busy and so happy. "Who can say what will be written there?"

Judith shrugged uneasily.

"That gives me the creeps," she remonstrated. "I don't like it. It sounds like funerals and ghosts——"

Patricia broke in on her dismal forebodings with a rippling, silvery laugh.

"It sounds like wedding bells to me!" she cried, gayly. "You and I don't hear alike, Ju. It sounds like wedding bells, and commencement essays, and checks for stories, and—and—and——"

"What, else?" demanded Judith, whose color had been rising at the alluring forecast.

Patricia made a despairing little gesture.

"I can't think of anything that will fit poor me," she confessed with mock dejection. "I'm so everlastingly commonplace that I don't sound at all."

"Yes, you do, too!" cried Judith ardently, flinging out a masterpiece. "You sound like a *syncopated opera;* doesn't she, Bruce?"

Patricia started as the grotesque words sank deep.

"You just wait till *I* try my real wings," she said with a queer little catch in her throat. "I've forgotten all about my dear music in these three riotous months, but I'll soon be ready to begin again."

"Is your laurel wreath on good and tight, Judy?" asked Bruce with a twinkle. "I'm going to beg Elinor to have hers tied on with nice little blue ribbons. Miss Pat is on the rampage for fame, and it isn't safe to take chances."

Patricia underwent a swift change as she lifted her shining eyes to Bruce's laughing face.

"Pooh, I'm not a bit dangerous and you know it, Bruce Haydon," she said with returning gayety. "I'm the family grub, and Judy and Elinor are the splendid butterflies." She paused with a merry gurgle. "I'm going to raise chickens for

these two glittering geniuses. Greycroft shall be my field of conquest and the white plume that leads to victory will be an Orpington. Lead on!"

The door clicked behind them and they set their faces to the sunset, and Greycroft, and home.

W